

CounterPunch

INSIDE THE CIA BY MELVIN GOODMAN

STEELTOWN, USA BY LEE BALLINGER

SYRIA, IRAQ AND THE SILENCED MAJORITY BY JENNIFER LOEWENSTEIN

BLACK SOCIALISM BY YVETTE CARNELL

THE TORMENTS OF SCALIA BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR



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Cover Image

Scream of Scalia (after Francis Bacon)

by Nick Roney

In Memory of
Alexander Cockburn
1941–2012



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Monbiot Ain't All Bad!

Dear Jeffrey St. Clair,
Excellent and eloquent piece on the 'green atom', except for very unfair remarks on Monbiot and Hansen. Apart from his misguided support for nuclear, Monbiot is the leading environmental journalist in the UK, with numerous important and radical articles in the Guardian, and he has strongly criticised the absurdly expensive Hinkley Point nuclear project.

Hansen, as you surely know, is a pioneering climate scientist, one of the earliest and most insistent voices for urgent action against climate change. As with Monbiot, one mistaken view in no way negates all their other good work, or justifies abusive epithets.

*Best wishes,
Felix*

Worth the Price

Hey! Wypijewski's piece on "Spotlight" was outstanding, phenomenal! Worth the price of my annual donation, easily.

*Thanks,
Drew Hunkins
Madison, WI*

The Handgun Dilemma

Andrew Smolski writes a well thought out essay per taking handguns away from the citizens. The argument that if the people give up arms, then the police will, leaves me less than convinced. It was 20 years ago that I read that the San Francisco police had accepted surplus bayonets. These are violent people who wouldn't be spearing barbeque beef at picnics with them. To me,

who incidently doesn't abide any firearms, it seems that the power structure needs to lead the way. Disarm the police first. Let them establish trust. I for one distrust our governments at all levels more than I fear hand guns.

*Paz,
Joe Cernac
San Jose*

The Sanders Wake Up Call

Dear Mr. St. Clair:

I must dissent from your criticism of Sanders as an imperfect "revolutionary". I am a registered Republican and have been one for more than 50 years. Yet I support and clearly understand what Sanders is trying to do. The notion that Sanders, or any individual, can lead a "revolution" is foolish. It is also dangerous, if you mean a true revolution, because true revolutions often leave worse in their wake. Think of France after the Jacobins seized power, and of course think of the horrors of what the Bolsheviks did, making tsarism look tolerable.

The only useful revolution which Sanders can lead is a revolution to wake up the American populace, the largest proportion of which has been ill-served by the evolution of the American economy and the domination of our economic and political system by what FDR called "economic royalists", and what TR called "malefactors of great wealth". He is a potential antidote to the pathetic message of "What's the matter with Kansas?". I have told people that the important thing about Sanders is that he is making an effort to educate and awaken the American

people to the powers that have caused the economy to move as it has, a result not of natural selection but of many choices that government has made: the trade deals, the weakening of unions as countervailing sources of power, a tax system that has moved away from the bargain that was made in 1986 to tax income from labor and from capital equally, at a maximum rate of 28%, and so on. Anything which Sanders can do to educate the populace to the sources of their misfortune is well to the good. And it is the fact that Hillary Clinton will most certainly not do this, not educate the populace, because of her supposed commitment to "moderation", that makes her so inferior a choice compared to Sanders.

Neither one of them, if elected, is likely to accomplish very much, since the deadlock in American politics as carried into the federal government is surely likely to continue. Therefore, Clinton's claims that she will be able to accomplish all manner of things is nothing but pure bullshit. Sanders, should he achieve a long-shot victory, may at least be expected to continue telling the public what is truly wrong. He will be no less successful in accomplishing unnamed "things" than she will be. But he will continue in his critical educational role, if nothing else.

That is why the truly pragmatic choice in this election is Sanders, not Clinton. Sanders is wrongly portrayed, both by his supporters and his detractors, as the candidate of the "heart", as opposed to the "mind". That is an entirely false

characterization of what represents providing the public with a dose of reality thinking. It is Sanders alone who gives even the slightest hint of playing that role and of making a contribution to the seriously dumbed down American public.

David B. Simpson, Esq.

Clinton vs Sanders

Dear Jeffery,

We have corresponded before, and here I am again. The Bernie Sanders chivalry piece was a deeply fulfilling read. Yes indeed.

I didn't want it to end. You were speaking 'for' me. Exactly! And can you believe that he allowed her to get away with saying that she is a progressive because she is a woman running for president? Actually, I think he has a problem thinking on his feet. I don't know if that is just who he is, or if he is in over his head. I hate to say 'age'. I mean. Noam is ten years his senior.

I find him underwhelming, for sure. I just disdain Clinton so deeply that I will vote for him in my Pa. primary. I do think he made that idiotic pact with the Dems to not undermine her before the national election. And then he will support her when/if she is nominated, so that undermines everything he is currently spouting.

*Thank you!
Rita*

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ROAMING CHARGES

The Bully on the Bench

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

The mythologizing of Antonin Scalia began only a few hours after his leathery heart stopped beating in West Texas and Satan swept his soul to the 8th Circle of the Inferno, where corrupt *barrators* are imprisoned for eternity. There, strapped to a sparking electric chair, Scalia's torments will be supervised by the demon Malacoda, who, Dante informs us, regularly "makes a trumpet of his ass."

There was something of an uproar over the lack of an autopsy for Scalia's ravaged body. Quick-draw conspiracists alleged the portly associate justice was murdered to give Obama a chance to realign the Supreme Court. These creative thinkers seem not to have paid much attention to the bleak presence of Elena Kagan on the bench. There's no mystery about Scalia's death. A three-pack a day man for most of his life, Scalia was clearly offended by his friends in the tobacco industry, whose murderous enterprise he zealously guarded in his legal opinions. And they say there's no justice.

It's not Scalia's corpse that needed dissecting, but the true nature and quality of his jurisprudence. From the *Weekly Standard* to the *Washington Post*, Scalia was lionized as a "titanic legal thinker," who possessed a blistering prose style and a wit "worthy of Swift." Even more bizarrely, the praise for Scalia's alleged brilliance was advanced by Beltway liberals, such as former Obama White House counsel Cass Sunstein (spouse of the odious Samantha Power) who asserted that Scalia was "witty, warm, funny and full of life. He was not only one of the most important justices in the nation's history; he was also one of the greatest." This curious assessment would have surprised former

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who for years sternly refused to assign any major court ruling to Scalia because he feared Scalia's mad legal theories and nasty prose style would undermine the standing of the court.

None of these attributes stand scrutiny. Any sober assessment of Scalia's legal writing would find them incoherent, contradictory and at times bordering on the pathological. In other words, he was a crank and bully, who was more than willing to consign a man to death even when facts proved his innocence. In 2002, Scalia morbidly boasted about being part of "the machinery of death."

Over the years, Scalia constructed an image of himself as a crusty anachronism, a throwback to a pre-Lapsarian America, a kind of constitutional necromancer who could divine meaning from a Constitution that he repeatedly claimed was "dead, dead, dead." But Scalia's concept of "originalism"—the view that the Constitution is constricted by the 18th century definitions of the language used by the Framers—is a less of a cogent legal theory than a shrewd smokescreen. His crackpot legal theories served as legalistic camouflage for his own political prejudices and bigotry. Scalia often acted as if he, and he alone, could commune with the shade of James Madison to divine the original intent of a cohort of 18th century slave-owners on matters involving electronic wiretaps, drones and climate change.

Scalia's dissents lash out wildly at nearly every manifestation of modernity, from racial integration and affirmative action to abortion rights and environmental protection. These social advances Scalia viewed as part of the great antinomian threat to his starchy vision of the moral order of the

universe. When it came to immigrant bashing, even Donald Trump would have to take a backseat to Scalia, who wrote in a 2013 dissent in the Arizona case that Americans feel "under siege by large numbers of illegal immigrants who invade their property, strain their social services, and even place their lives in jeopardy."

Nothing seemed to unnerve Scalia quite so much as his infantile revulsion at sodomy. He obsessively ranted about the "homosexual agenda," which threatened to infect the Republic and force god-fearing Americans to, as he put it in his risible dissent in *Lawrence v. Texas*, accept gays "as partners in their business, as scoutmasters for their children, as teachers at their children's schools, or as borders in their houses."

Imagine being a bright young legal clerk having to research and draft these ludicrous and foul-minded opinions. By all accounts working for Scalia was a miserable exercise in career advancement. "He wasn't happy unless someone, somewhere, was suffering, preferably at his hands," said one of his former clerks, Bruce Hay, now a professor at Harvard Law School. "This was his jurisprudence."

Long rumored to be a member of the reactionary Opus Dei Catholic sect, Scalia wore his religion on his robes, even supervising Clarence Thomas's conversion to Catholicism. But Scalia was no mendicant. Indeed he was one of the most avaricious and gluttonous justices of the modern era. By 2014, Scalia had amassed a fortune of nearly \$5 million, most of that sum accumulating after his elevation to the Court in 1986, through lavish speaking fees gleaned from conservative think tanks and corporate chieftains, some of whom had cases pending before the court.

Scalia expired in his barbarous element: alone in bed, breathing mask on his nightstand, at a swank resort, after a day of blood sport sponsored by a creepy cult of millionaire hunters called the Order of St. Hubertus, as coyotes chuckled in the distance. Over to you, Malacoda. **CP**



EMPIRE BURLESQUE

Spoiled Ballots: Yet More Rotten Choices from Modern Democracy

BY CHRIS FLOYD

The greatly benighted land of old Blighty is now embarked on yet another of the fundamental turbulations that have marked the latest era of “Conservative” rule. Not content with having nearly destroyed the island’s ancient union by driving the Scots to the very brink of independence, the gilded goobers of the British elite have now engineered a referendum on leaving the European Union—which, if approved, will necessitate a reordering of national life on nearly every level ... including the distinct possibility of, er, destroying the island’s ancient union by driving the Scots into independence.

By the by, does anyone remember when “conservative” meant “cautious, averse to change”? Now, on both sides of the Atlantic, so-called conservatives do nothing but advocate “disruption” and “revolution,” giddy with notions of endless upheaval and permanent crisis, happy to shred traditions, decimate communities, gut institutions, exalt ideological fervor and unhinged emotion over rule of law.

The more correct term for this kind of behavior is “radical,” of course. But this peculiar brand of radicalism aims to reshape society toward a single aim: the endless enrichment of the rich, using the fears and prejudices of the hoi polloi as fuel for the latter’s own despoliation.

And thus it is in Britain’s latest convulsion. The “Brexit” vote is, in so many ways, the very model of a major modern democracy: it offers voters a “choice” between two crappy possibilities and

says, “Good luck with that, suckers!” For although the EU had shown itself to be an organization devoted chiefly to the rapacious imposition of destructive corporate will (no more so than in last year’s brutal beatdown of democracy’s birthplace, Greece), the plutocratic poltroons pushing for Britain’s EU exit are, if anything, even worse.

The Brexiters have no objection at all to the EU’s most pernicious activities. Indeed, they seized on the agony of Greece as a fear-mongering bullroarer to frighten the folks into the Tory camp in last year’s election. “OMG, if we don’t keep drinking the bitter medicine of austerity, if we don’t keep knocking Grandma’s crutches away, we’re going to turn into Greece! Aieeee!” They are in full accord with the EU’s ball-busting brand of capitalism.

No, what they object to are the few protections the EU still provides for the non-plutocratic rabble (perhaps out of nostalgia for its idealistic origins in the aftermath of WWII, when people thought a closer union might keep the highly advanced nations of Western civilization from massacring each other every few years).

What the Brexiters hate with a visceral passion are the EU’s human rights laws, its regulations against feudal exploitation of workers (known fondly as “flexibility” in British boardrooms) and, above all, its immigration policies, which Brexiters believe have swamped their pure and holy island with grubby Eurotrash and dangerous darkies from even farther afield.

Led by such stalwarts as the Trump-like blusterer Boris Johnson, the Le Pen manque Nigel Farage, and the creepily Heepish Michael Gove—a man who gives Ted Cruz a run for his money in the personal warmth department—the Brexiters dream of a rump Little England, free of sissy-mary restraints on the lord of the manor’s ancient rights to order his affairs as he sees fit, without any folderol about the rabble’s “rights”—much less any interference from Johnny Foreigner!

For example, Gove—a long-time Murdoch minion who delivered much of Britain’s public school system into the hands of privateers, grifters and religious cranks—says Brexit will allow Blighty to “regain its moxie” and play a bolder role on the world stage.

It goes without saying that Gove, like most leading Brexiters, is an unabashed nostalgist for the lost glories of Empire, constantly hymning the great civilizing effect of that enterprise whose true nature was perhaps best captured by Mike Davis’s *Late Victorian Holocausts*.

Jeremy Corbyn, whose astonishing election as Labour leader was one of the few outbreaks of genuine democracy in modern times, is reluctantly supporting the campaign to remain in the EU.

Like many, he recognizes full well what the EU has become, but still sees some wan hope in what it could be. This may be a grasping at straws, but some see it as preferable to be being trapped on a tiny island permanently dominated by unrestrained Victorian Holocausters.

And so, again, voters are left with nothing but narrow, unpalatable choices: vote for this set of corporate hucksters—or this other set of corporate hucksters who are probably worse. (The same choice American voters will almost certainly be confronted with in November.)

Either way you’re screwed, mate.
Ain’t life grand? **CP**



EXIT STRATEGIES

Black Socialism

BY YVETTE CARNELL

Super Tuesday ended with the man who got arrested marching during the Civil Rights Movement, and supported Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign, losing the black vote to a Goldwater Girl. Democratic-socialist Bernie Sanders was trounced by corporate kleptocrat Hillary Clinton.

Prior to Super Tuesday, Sanders's bona fides within the black community had been called into question on several fronts. Civil rights icon John Lewis said of Sanders's involvement in the movement, "I never saw him", a comment Lewis was forced to walk back after even Martin Luther King Jr.'s close friend, Clarence B. Jones, articulated the absurdity of weighing Sanders's civil rights activism against whether he'd stood within Lewis' periphery at a protest march, saying it wasn't a true index of the young Sander's commitment to racial justice. Although John Lewis conceded that line of attack, he wasn't done yet.

Up next: Red baiting. "I think it's the wrong message to send to any group. There's not anything free in America. We all have to pay for something. Education is not free. Health care is not free. Food is not free. Water is not free. I think it's very misleading to say to the American people, we're going to give you something free," said Lewis.

The 'nothing is free' conservative line of attack is a vital ideological tool for stirring undercurrents of racial animus in the minds of its mostly white base. Conservative voters are no longer implicated in the diminished quality of black life if they're convinced that the real cause of black failure is us wanting 'free stuff', as opposed to systemic racism.

That Rep. John Lewis was bestowing upon Hillary Clinton the politi-

cal capital he'd purchased with blood during the Civil Rights Movement was predictable. As an establishment member of the black misleadership and race brokerage clique, the idea of a Sanders presidency, which would replace racialized narratives with that of class, threatens to put racial spokespeople out of business. So it was expected that Lewis would throw his support behind Clinton. No one, however, expected him to use anti-Socialist rhetoric to capitalize on the anxieties of African-American voters.

South Carolina Congressman James Clyburn added to the suspicion that Sanders was just another self-interested white politician whose socialist leanings were incompatible with African-American interests. Clyburn said that "HBCUs will all close down all across America because they would not be able to afford to stay open" if Sanders's free college education plan was ever implemented.

The message was clear; only specifically anti-racist policies were beneficial to African-Americans, whereas socialism was an essentially white project which no self-respecting black person should trust.

It is not wrong to be anti-socialist, but when anti-socialism is dispensed to defend capitalism, it is hucksterism. The historical reality is that socialist and communist thought were once the driving forces behind some black liberation philosophies in this country.

Most notably, the Black Panther Party emphasized Marxist philosophy, but emphatically, Congressman Bobby Rush, a former Panther, offered no defense of Sanders, as the presidential candidate was red-baited by Rush's fellow Congressional Black Caucus members.

During the Great Depression, communists worked to secure economic and racial justice in Alabama, as historian Robin Kelley documents in *Hammer and Hoe*. During a 2010 interview with NPR's Michel Martin, Kelley described how Communist members led the sharecropper's union, "which at one point had about 12,000 members in the black belt counties of Alabama." Membership in the union was overwhelmingly African-American.

The black elected officials and thought leaders who are now red-baiting Sanders are far outside the traditions of black liberation in this country. Unlike the right wing, who remain well in line with their traditions by supporting a fascist candidate for president, African-American establishment politicians and thought leaders have wholly abandoned their ideological inheritance.

There is a heavy stench of wickedness in the pro-capitalist positions taken by so many black misleadership functionaries. In America only 5 percent of African-American households have more than \$350,000 in net worth. In contrast, a full 10 percent of white households, totaling over 8 million families, have more than \$1.3 million in net worth. The percentage of poor black children living in concentrated poverty is 45 percent, compared to 12 percent for poor white children.

This capitalist sloganeering of Lewis and Clyburn is being fed to communities that not only haven't benefitted from the economic philosophy, but have actually been exploited by the capitalist machine. Now we face the truth: This isn't about what's best for the African-American constituents of black elected officials. Although capitalism hasn't bestowed upon ordinary African-Americans any wealth whatsoever, selling out to capitalists has reaped rewards for black race brokers. It's how black misleadership functionaries earn their keep in the Democratic Party. And selling out is also a form of collectivism; just not in the way black socialist revolutionaries had ever imagined. **CP**



GRASPING AT STRAWS

Monetary Policy Enters the Twilight Zone

BY MIKE WHITNEY

One thing you can say about Central Banks, they don't give up easily. After seven years of failing to spur a strong recovery with cheap money, Central Banks in Europe and Japan are back at it again, only this time they come armed with their latest concoction: negative interest rates.

Negative rates or NIRP is a variation of earlier policies (ZIRP and QE) that focused on lowering long and short-term rates to reduce the cost of borrowing. The idea is that more borrowing means more spending, and more spending means stronger growth. It's all pretty simple. But here's the glitch. According to the geniuses at the Fed, the demand for new loans depends on the cost of money. Thus, if money is cheap, people will borrow. That's the theory, at least. Regrettably, this over-simplified Pavlovian model of human behavior hasn't worked for the last seven years. Loan growth has remained relatively flat even though rates have been at historic lows.

Why? Because the price of money merely determines whether borrowing is affordable, not whether it's desirable. The Fed doesn't seem to understand this simple point. Borrowing has to make sense otherwise people are not going to add to their debtload. If a business has nothing to invest in because demand for its products is weak, then the CEO is certainly not going to take out a loan to boost productivity. The same is true of households and consumers. They're not going to pile on more red ink if they're unemployed, worried about getting laid-off, or trying to rebuild their savings for retirement. This is why cheap money doesn't always work; it's

because price doesn't necessarily create demand. Like we said earlier, the Fed doesn't seem to grasp this point. They seem to think that people can always be led around by the nose provided there are enough carrots and sticks on hand.

Well, if QE and zero rates are carrots, then negative rates are sticks because negative rates are definitely punitive. You see, when rates go negative, banks are charged a slight fee on excess reserves kept at the Central Bank. This "tax" on reserves creates a powerful incentive to lend as much money as possible. Unfortunately, it also increases the likelihood that the banks will ease standards and start lending to unqualified applicants with dodgy credit, spotty employment history, or who are more likely to default on their loans. This is the same situation that led to the financial crisis in 2008. Now the central banks in Europe and Japan have implemented a policy that paves the way for a similar catastrophe in the future.

Negative rates will also have a destructive impact on bank deposits, in fact, they already have. Charging savers a fee on their deposits is not going to convince them to spend more of their hard-earned money at the shopping malls or on wild nights on the town. Quite the contrary. What many people appear to be doing in the countries where NIRP has been implemented is withdrawing their savings and squirreling-away the cash at home. That's why many countries are now considering eliminating large-denomination currency, like the \$100 bill and the 500 euro note. Supporters of the policy say it's intended to reduce criminal activity and money launder-

ing, but it's really an attack on hoarders, the people who refuse to be penalized for keeping their money in the bank.

How does this achieve the banks' objective of boosting spending and strengthening growth? It doesn't. It just makes matters worse, in fact, even the banks are getting mauled by the policy. The Fed hasn't even implemented negative rates yet, and already many of the countries biggest money-center banks have been moaning that the super-low rates are flattening the yield-curve that is cutting into earnings. Far from fixing the situation, negative rates will only aggravate it further by dimming inflation expectations which will push long-term yields lower still.

So what can be done? How do we break this addiction to easy money that inflates gigantic asset bubbles but does nothing to rev up the real economy?

Well, we could always return to the tried-and-true remedies of the past, like good-old fiscal stimulus. But that would require a seismic shift in the existing power structure. The Congress would have to play a more active role in setting economic policy while our monetary politburo would be forced to take a backseat. That might rankle a few honchos at the Fed, but it would also rebalance the system.

One last thing: The IMF, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and other members of the elite establishment have recently begun to criticize the "over-reliance on monetary policy" and have started to push for "near-term fiscal policy" as a way to boost growth. Apparently, the bigwigs are worried that the slowdown in China, the turbulent equities markets, and the plunging oil prices could precipitate another crisis if something isn't done quickly to shore up global GDP. So they've shifted away from monetary policy and returned to the more reliable Keynesian fiscal stimulus. While it might not be a huge victory, it would certainly be a step in the right direction. **CP**

Students of U.S.-Middle Eastern foreign policy learn to analyze and discuss the actions of the United States in the Middle East within a political-geographical framework drawn up for them, with minor adjustments, in 1916. This is unsurprising because U.S. political and military decisions are so often determined by state boundaries within which leaders and their governments rule. This does not mean cross-border factors are left out; they are often critical to a given situation but are still viewed as variables that must be taken into consideration despite or because of the artificial lines that divide up the modern nation states. Although many people are instructed to “think outside the box”—with the “box” in this context meaning a state or states—few are reminded that what is “inside the box” ought to matter as well. Public opinion, for example, is merely a disturbance of the peace.

Power brokers may genuinely wish to consider creative, usually terrifying, military, political, and economic solutions to old problems. What ruling elites and the soulless institutions they represent refuse to take into consideration are the consequences their behavior has on the millions of human beings stuck involuntarily within the confines of their decisions. Whether diplomatic discussions or bombing raids dominate any given conflict, public opinion and the daily lives of a country's people are noticeably absent from whatever decisions their leaders make.

Today, for example, insofar as the Syrian Civil War and the war against ISIS go, the peoples of Syria and Iraq have become as voiceless and irrelevant to national and international strategic interests as the Palestinians—a distressing fact as the 12th decade of Palestinian public opposition to settler colonialism in their land persists.* As a result, Syrians and Iraqis are, like their Palestinian neighbors, living in great, free-for-all human poaching grounds not unlike the occupied Palestinian territories except that, for some, there

MIDDLE EAST NOTES

Syria, Iraq and the Silenced Majority

BY JENNIFER LOEWENSTEIN

are escape routes for those fleeing the bloodshed (just as there were in Palestine during the Nakba).

The fate of millions of desperate Syrian and Iraqi refugees, however, has yet to be determined, while those who remain in their countries, millions more of whom are internally displaced, are ruled over by internal and external powers that largely determine whether they eat or starve, stay warm or cold, work or don't work, live or die. In the gravest of cases, the voiceless masses endure an often deliberate, living death conveniently overlooked, unmentioned, or deliberately ignored depending on the status accorded them by the “international community”. It would appear that the people most responsible for the disastrous events in the region simply don't care what happens to the people most affected by their experiments in collective torture.

A glance at modern Middle Eastern history helps us understand the conditions in which so many millions of people live today and helps explain the successive, miserable regimes—colonial and otherwise—that ruled and rule over them, one after another, up to the present.

Significantly, after the First World War, from January to June 1919, the victorious allies—notably Britain and France—met over 100 times to determine the fates of their vanquished foes. British and French representatives of the Paris Peace Conference created a new order for Eastern Europe (the old Hapsburg Monarchy), the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East,

and elsewhere. These two World War I victors literally redrew the map of what we now call “the Middle East” based, to a great extent, on a document they'd drawn up in 1916 known as the Sykes-Picot Accord. This document had been signed and sealed well before the Allied victory, yet it carved out a series of states, most of which—with minor adjustments—still make up the map of the modern Middle East, vast swathes of which were then divided into British and French spheres of influence.

In other words, two years before the end of the war, in what was supposed to be a secret agreement—but which was leaked to the public by Russian revolutionaries in 1917—British and French officials outlined their goals for a Middle Eastern ‘new world order’ awarding portions of it to themselves like trophies after a sporting match. Promises they made to other parties before Sykes-Picot were ignored.

Until 2014, when ISIS effectively erased a section of the northeastern border of Syria merging it with a northwestern portion of Iraq, thereby creating the geographical “Islamic State”, the nations of the Middle East had mostly retained their post-World War One boundaries. The “Islamic State” went on to expand, by violence, its territory and to endorse a new “caliph,” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi—the product of prison camps transformed by the Americans into detention and torture chambers after the 2003 U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. There, inmates were routinely humiliated, physically and

sexually abused, and psychologically tortured for opposing (often allegedly) the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003.

With the exception of Israel's aggressive, perpetual expansion into all of historic Palestine, the map that dictated the post-WWI boundaries of the Middle East has remained largely unchanged. As British and French imperial power waned, and as the Soviet Superpower disintegrated ending the "Cold War" by 1990, the United States reigned supreme as master of the Middle East.

This new reality has had increasingly devastating effects on the region as the United States paved the way step by step, base by base, prison by prison, bomb by bomb, and drone by drone for competing reigns of terror across the Arab world.

Public opinion can be ignored, diverted, or repressed. In drawing up the post-World War I Middle Eastern boundaries, the parties involved—European, American, and Middle Eastern—were not without serious differences of opinion and policy.

A few representatives from the Middle East were allowed, grudgingly, to make their appeals at the Paris Peace Conference, among them Sa'd Zaghlul of Egypt; a 5-man Lebanese delegation; and Amir Faisal who, as the leader of the Great Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire and ally of the British, believed he had earned the right to govern Syria and territories adjacent to it under former Ottoman control.

After all it was Faisal and his forces that had liberated Damascus from Ottoman rule in 1918. Unsurprisingly, therefore, he proceeded to set up an Arab government based in Damascus after the war. This was in accordance with the promise made by the British to allow an independent Arab Kingdom in the Middle East should Sharif Hussein of Mecca (and father of Faisal) agree to support the British against the Ottomans in the First World War.

The agreement reached in what

is known as the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence (1915–16) was clear, but diametrically opposed to the Sykes-Picot Accord—as well as to the Balfour Declaration, drawn up in 1917 promising a national home for the Jewish people. Faisal, humiliated at the Peace Conference, nevertheless returned to Damascus to announce the arrival, in June 1919, of the King-Crane Commission.

The King-Crane Commission, initiated by the Americans and headed by Henry King of Oberlin College and Chicago businessman Charles Crane, both with extensive knowledge of the Middle East, was intended to determine the wishes of the people of the Middle East. Britain and France were supposed to have taken part, but each found spurious reasons to excuse themselves knowing full well that the findings of the commission would be meaningless to them—and for good reasons: they were diametrically opposed to the desires of the great powers.

After weeks of extensive travels and meetings, the most comprehensive and inclusive poll of individuals and groups across Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and parts of Jordan ever undertaken in the region, representing over 3% of the population from workers' groups to peasant unions, women's groups, merchants, landowners, notables, and minorities living in the region, was met with blind eyes. The will of the people stood in the way of Great Power designs.

The findings of the Commission are nevertheless as significant now as they were in 1919. The commission succeeded in gathering nearly 2000 petitions with 91,079 signatures (See: *The Arabs: a History* by Eugene Rogan). Perhaps more importantly, in anticipation of the King-Crane Commission Nationalist sentiment was stirred up among the peoples of Greater Syria. Foremost among the wishes of the people of the Middle East was absolute independence from colonial rule, direct or indirect; opposition to any

partition of Arab lands; the rejection of any sort of temporary trusteeship; and an unqualified opposition to Zionism, which meant the settlement and colonization of ancestral lands in Palestine. Overwhelmingly, those polled wanted an independent Arab state, an elected assembly, and a constitutional monarchy headed by Amir Faisal Hussein.

There is a great deal to be learned about the Syrian Civil War from the nation's history as a French colony and its long term reaction to colonialism afterward. For twenty-six years, Syria was occupied by the French. Determined battles and rebellions, nationalist uprisings, the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925–1927, uneasy (but sometimes cosy) alliances between colonial masters and the powerful strata of the colonized nations, and later manifestations of violent and non-violent resistance failed to throw off the yoke of colonial oppression but succeeded in crystallizing Arab nationalism across the Middle East from Egypt to Iraq.

Post-colonial Arab dictatorships arose out of the failure of nascent democratic ideals to take root in the shadows of colonial intervention, of residual power in the hands of certain notable families, and in the belief that above all, a powerful national military force was necessary for strength, prestige, local wars and, ultimately, control over their own people.

The "Arab Spring" of 2011 was the first region-wide crack in the old order. It arose from overwhelming popular anger and discontent at regimes that assured nothing but cronyism, violence, a vacuum of civil liberties and human rights and, ultimately, subservience to U.S. power. There is no end in sight to the misery and bloodshed spreading from Syria and Iraq to Libya and Yemen. The prisoners of war will remain prisoners of war until world wide public opinion, especially in the West, can override state-sponsored global designs, and the products and industries of corporate murder. **CP**

Steeltown, USA

BY LEE BALLINGER

“With the specter of violent death hanging over each shift, workers relished the opportunity to sit back and watch the local boys fight it out on the field.”

In 1954, Chuck Klausing became the head football coach at Braddock High School in Braddock, Pennsylvania, one of many steel mill towns in the Pittsburgh area. The outgoing coach told Klausing: “You don’t want this job. The kids are undisciplined. The administration isn’t in it. It’s an unwinnable situation.”

In the previous nine seasons, the Braddock High Tigers had won only 21 games while losing 54. Yet the new coach, using a combination of intense preparation, strict discipline, and a healthy dose of trick plays, guided his team to six straight undefeated seasons, winning the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League championship every year.

Approaching Klausing’s sixth season in the summer of 1959, the city of Braddock was consumed by both a looming nationwide steel strike and the pressure of Braddock High’s five consecutive undefeated years. If the team won its first seven games of the upcoming season, it would set a new na-

pool, basketball court, or water fountain. This mirrored the situation at Braddock’s U.S. Steel plant, the Edgar Thompson Works, where blacks were restricted to the worst jobs such as the labor gang or the coke plant.

Much of Chuck Klausing’s efforts in building a unified team took place off the field. Braddock High had separate school dances for whites and blacks until the coach was finally able to engineer an integrated one in 1958.

Klausing, a white man from a small Pennsylvania town where his father was the mayor, was angry about the violent opposition to integration at Central High School in Little Rock and announced to a roomful of coaches at a football luncheon that he would welcome Central High students to Braddock.

Even the menu of pre-game meals was used to bring the players closer together. “Klausing had noticed that his black players would scarf down roast beef, baked potatoes, and peas while the white players, and particularly the Catholics, preferred fish, big globs of mac and cheese, and buttered rolls. Klausing got the kitchen to serve two options at every meal. Presented with a choice, the boys started experimenting, nibbling unfamiliar side dishes and trading portions of meat. Before long, mothers all over town were fielding new requests for dinner items. On the advice of their Catholic counterparts, black players started staking out Friday fish fries at churches all over town.”

“When I started at Braddock, we had maybe three black kids on the team and by ‘59, about half the team was black,”

“The problem is that corporations don’t see prosperity as a two-way street. A company’s profitability is tied to cutting our wages and benefits and to replacing us with some form of automated technology.”

tional record. The story of this juncture between the mill and the gridiron is told in *Striking Gridiron*, a fascinating book by Greg Nichols.

“Braddock High was an integrated school, but racism still burned hot in the steel towns of Western Pennsylvania. The mills created a caste system, with black workers stuck at the bottom.”

“Braddock High had no black teachers,” Nichols adds. “One government teacher discouraged black students from joining the debate club, maintaining that non-white students smelled funny.”

One of Braddock High’s black players, Jimmy Gilliam, had moved to town from Alabama after his father had been murdered by the Klan. Although Gilliam and other black residents could check out books from Braddock’s Carnegie Library, they were not allowed to use the library’s gym, indoor

Klausing told George Guido of SportsTalk. “We proved that blacks and whites could play together.”

One of those black players in 1959 was Ray Henderson, who caught the winning touchdown pass against bitter rival North Braddock Scott. He went to work in the local mill and in 1995 co-produced a documentary with Tony Buba about the history of racial discrimination in the mills entitled *Struggles in Steel*.

The film gives voice to black steelworkers from across the country, detailing steel mill apartheid and the struggles against it. It also describes the limitations of the 1974 Consent Decree, in which a paltry \$30.9 million was distributed to tens of thousands of black steelworkers nationwide to compensate for the opportunities and pay they had lost over the years.

On the other hand, the Consent Decree did lead to the end



Republic Steel. Photo: IDEM.

of department seniority. This was a policy in which layoffs and job bids were based on a worker's status only in their own department. No worker from outside that department could ever get a job bid there no matter how long they had worked for the company. Department seniority was very contentious because the pay and conditions varied a lot depending on where you worked.

The Consent Decree, which was hotly debated in the mills as a strictly racial matter, actually opened up job movement in the mill not only for blacks but for the majority of whites as well. I know this from my own experience since I worked in a steel mill both before and after the implementation of the Decree. The end of department seniority allowed me to move out of the labor pool and up the ladder until I got a much more desirable job on a steel-pouring crew.

We have seen this movie before. During the post-Civil War period of Reconstruction and the rise of a Southern black electorate, black officeholders shaped new state constitutions and built thousands of new schools and expanded social services. These changes also benefited the mass of Southern poor whites, many of whom were, in addition, then able to vote for the first time.

"You can't hurt me without hurting America," steelworker Francis Brown says in the documentary *Struggles in Steel*. Absolutely. And if you flip this coin over it's still true—you can't help blacks without helping America.

On July 15, 1959 half a million steelworkers across the country, black and white together, went on strike over the issue of job elimination. This included 4,500 workers at Edgar Thompson Works in Braddock, which had opened in 1875 as Andrew Carnegie's first major plant.

This was a continuation of a bitter history of labor relations at the Edgar Thompson. Nichols writes:

In May 1916 men and women employed at ET went on strike for an eight hour workday. Joining ranks with workers from nearby towns, they marched through the streets behind a local band. Steel companies had made money hand over first during the early years of the war, and workers thought the windfall might help usher in long-hoped-for labor reforms...Private guards amassed at the edge of the mill. Strikers surged toward the gates. Guards fired into the crowd, and three Braddock residents were killed. The governor declared martial law. Rather than arresting the guards, police rounded up dozens of strikers.

After the 1959 strike had been underway for a month, steelworker families began to go hungry. In response, the Allegheny County Surplus Food Bureau gave the strikers food, which was augmented by rations distributed by the Braddock union local. As tension increased from stretched budgets and little progress in the strike, the football team was central to keeping up town morale. The Tigers kept winning, drawing ever closer to the national record.

In October, the U.S. District Court for Western Pennsylvania issued a Taft-Hartley injunction, forcing union members back to work without a new contract. The union's response was to challenge the constitutionality of Taft-Hartley. They lost in district court but were granted a stay of the injunction while they appealed. They lost at the Third Circuit Court of Appeals and then went immediately to the Supreme Court.

The union case was before the Supremes when the Braddock High Tigers defeated Canon-McMillan on October 29 and established the new national record for an undefeated streak. On November 6, Braddock went on to defeat North Braddock Scott and qualified for the Western Pennsylvania championship game. On November 7, the Supreme Court upheld the Taft-Hartley injunction 8-1 on the 116th day of the strike. On November 20, Braddock High won the state title.

Braddock High would not have become a football powerhouse if its team were not so thoroughly integrated. Today we take this for granted, but doing it in the 1950s put the Tigers far ahead of their segregated time. As for the issue of racial equality in the mills, Bureau of Labor Statistics figures

growing downwardly mobile common core, a biracial section of both the employed and the unemployed which confirms Haley's assessment.

During the 1959 strike, most U.S. steelmaking capacity went unused and foreign companies filled the vacuum. Imports of steel doubled that year. A generation later, we were constantly bombarded with propaganda from both the company and the union about the evils of steel imports. The union made a film about it called *Where's Joe?* and the company required all of us to watch it. The primary causes of job loss—new technology and speedup—were not mentioned.

Ever since the 1959 steel strike, steelworkers and so many others have longed to return to an industrial Fortress America, an economy where the world buys our products but doesn't compete with them in the marketplace. Symbolic of this, in downtown Braddock there stands a twelve-foot high statue of Joe Magarac, a legendary Paul Bunyan-type figure said to have been born in an iron mine. He is portrayed bending a steel rail with his bare hands, reminiscent of a time when steel was made to a large degree by hand.

Today, steel is made by fewer and fewer hands utilizing

Anti-union right to work laws have been pushed through by corporate interests in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana. West Virginia, home to the United Mine Workers Union, passed a right to work law in February. Pennsylvania may be next.

for 2014 show that 10.3% of steelworkers are black and 14% are Latino. This is significantly below their percentage in the general population and confirms that full job equity in the steel industry has yet to be achieved.

When I worked in the mill, there were currents of friendship between many whites and blacks. But there was also widespread and vicious racism. I was heartened to discover recently that in 2008 Wall Street Journal reporter Jonathan Kaufman went to the mill where I once worked in Warren, Ohio (two hours from Braddock), to interview union members about their feelings on race. Kaufman found attitudes were much improved. This was confirmed in 2013 when Darryl Parker was elected the first African-American president of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 1375 in Warren. That could never have happened during the time I was working there.

In *Struggles in Steel*, Leon Haley of the Pittsburgh Urban League notes that at one time the primary question in steel was one of race but that "today it's becoming more a question of economics and class." This might sound optimistic, since if you compare the social statistics of all whites to those of all blacks the disparity remains striking. But there is also a

higher and higher levels of technology. The U.S. steel industry now employs only 150,000 people, a drop of more than 300,000 since 1959. In the early 1980s, the average steel mill produced one ton of steel per 10.1 worker hours. The 2014 average was one ton per 1.9 worker hours, with many facilities producing a ton of steel in less than one worker hour. The director of research at Armco Steel predicted some years ago that by the middle of the 21st century steel would be made in clean factories without smoke and fire. This portends a shift to laborless steel production with robots and computers, following the inevitable template of our time. Meanwhile, the Braddock mill limps along with fewer than a thousand workers, kept marginally alive by an infusion of new technology.

The world has tremendous excess steel production capacity, even though world crude steel production decreased 3 percent in 2015. Richard McCormack, editor of *Manufacturing and Technology News*, told me that "The U.S. represents only a tiny sliver of global output—and its output has been about the same for 40 years."

The industrial Fortress America now exists only as a museum of the mind. But not for a lack of trying to make it

real. There have been hundreds of charges filed by companies with various trade organizations alleging that China is dumping low cost steel on the American market. The USW continues to support these efforts. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of steelworkers have seen their jobs eliminated not only in the United States, but in the rival steelmaking countries of Europe, Japan, and, yes, China.

It's tempting to be dismissive and simply point out that a single payer health care system in the United States would make the price of American steel more competitive by eliminating the heavy costs of employee health insurance. Yet the most important thing isn't whether we tactically fight imports or not, it's whether that's the limit of our thinking. The most dangerous aspect of the anti-import crusade, even worse than giving political cover to the likes of Donald Trump, is the alchemy it performs, making it appear as if corporations and workers have common interests. They do not.

Consider Lakshmi Mittal, the world's preeminent steel tycoon and India's second richest man. His empire employs 237,000 people, one sixth of them in North America. Mittal spent \$60 million (\$253 per employee) on his daughter Vanisha's wedding, flying 1,000 guests to Paris, where the festivities lasted six days. Mittal's net worth is \$12.3 billion. Meanwhile, Mittal's American employees are battling concessions if they are working, trying to avoid foreclosure if they're not.

The USW was long ago forced to give up the right to strike and the loss of this important tool makes it harder for steelworkers to prevent the gap between themselves and mill owners like Mittal from widening even further. But company-imposed lockouts still happen. Last summer, Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI), the corporate descendant of Allegheny Ludlum Steel, locked out a total of 2,200 USW members in six states. The workers offered to keep working under their old contract, even though it had expired but ATI literally locked the doors and has yet to reopen them. The company wants to force its workers to accept pay and benefit cuts, claiming they are necessary because of competition with China. Before the lockout, ATI's top five executives gave themselves \$19 million in bonuses and salary increases of up to 70 per cent. CEO Richard Harshman now makes \$8 million a year.

Researchers at the University of Massachusetts Amherst have listed ATI as the 26th worst corporate air polluter in the U.S., as company facilities release almost 600,000 pounds of toxic chemicals into the air annually. This has the greatest impact on the workers in the plant and the working class families who live nearby, while the coupon clippers who own ATI's stock live in splendor, far from epicenter of the toxic stew.

Anti-union right to work laws have been pushed through by corporate interests in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Indiana. West Virginia, home to the United Mine Workers Union, passed a right to work law in February. Pennsylvania may be next.

In 1984, during the Pittsburgh stop of his Born in the USA

tour, Bruce Springsteen connected with Ron Weisen, radical president of the union at US Steel in Homestead, just upriver from Braddock, and made a \$10,000 donation to the local's food bank. But this time the food wasn't simply for survival pending a return to normalcy, as it was during the 1959 strike. Those days are over. In 1985, the Homestead mill was shut down and dynamited, leaving its workers constantly needing food, while U.S. Steel sold the land to a shopping mall developer.

Despite the popularity of the concept of the 1 per cent and the 99 per cent, most Americans believe they live in a classless society. This is only partly a result of the relentless promotion of the one big happy family message by the media and the schools. There is also something objective pushing our thinking in that direction—the fact that we live in a society based on corporations and that our fate is tied to them. When I worked in the mill I would frequently stop by the office just off the pouring platform to check on how many orders were on the books. I knew precisely what the numbers had to be if I was to avoid getting laid off. When it was below zero in January and my family gas bill was through the roof, I was hoping for the company to pick up orders like I was rooting for my high school football team.

This puts us all in a very difficult position. We need to get a corporation (or an entity dependent on corporate support) to give us a job at a time when few jobs are available and fewer will be available in the future. If we do have a job or are applying for a job, our fate is tied to the fate of that company. This causes our thinking about other ways society could be organized to huddle quietly in the back of our minds, as the need for simple survival boxes in our vision. Despite growing resentment of corporate greed, we want corporations to prosper.

The problem is that corporations don't see prosperity as a two way street. A company's profitability is tied to cutting our wages and benefits and, ultimately, to replacing us with some form of advanced technology. In our confusion, we end up bullied into accepting the maxim that "what's good for General Motors is good for the USA" and see ourselves as pitted not just against other people here and around the world, but against ourselves.

To break free from our straitjacket of co-dependent thinking, we need to reach across barriers, such as race, and challenge the entrenched wisdom that things can only be the way they are. That's what the Braddock High Tigers did. They dreamed of accomplishing things that had never happened before and didn't stop until those dreams came true. **CP**

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Inside the CIA

Goodman vs. Gates

BY MELVIN GOODMAN

Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue
freely according to conscience above all liberties.

John Milton—“Areopagitica”

One CIA director deserves special attention: Robert M. Gates, who led the CIA from November 1991 to January 1993, one of the shortest stewardships of any DCI. I met Gates on his first day at the CIA in August 1968, when he reported to the Soviet Foreign Policy branch in the Office of Current Intelligence (OCI). Since I joined the office two years earlier and felt lost in a vast bureaucracy, I took new analysts to lunch (in the cafeteria) to give them a sense of what the DI was about. Doing so gave me an introduction to our new analysts.

From 1968 to 1981, Bob and I were colleagues and close friends. Both of us were accidental intelligence officers. We were graduate students at Indiana University, where we dropped in on CIA recruiting officers. Both of us pursued the recruitment pitch. I did so because I was getting restless in Bloomington, Indiana, and the recruitment process involved free trips to Washington for interviews and a polygraph examination. Both of us earned PhDs in history, while we were working at the CIA, with Gates pursuing his course work at night at Georgetown University.

Bob and I were on opposite sides of the net on the role of the intelligence analyst in the production of intelligence. I came from the traditional school dominated by Yale University Professor Sherman Kent, who served in the Office of National Estimates from 1952 to 1967. Kent, who many considered the “father of intelligence analysis,” demanded a wall between the analyst and the policymaker so that policy views didn’t affect intelligence analysis. Gates did not believe that intelligence was relevant unless it could be tied to a specific policy, meaning support for policy. To Gates, it was policy support that made intelligence relevant. To me, intelligence had to be neutral, pointing the way to opportunities and challenges for the policymaker but avoiding policy advocacy.

Gates’s climb was marked by numerous self-serving memoranda to CIA director William Casey that emphasized that DI intelligence was too tame and too non-controversial. He told Casey that “If no one gives a shit about what the intelligence analysis was saying, there would be no controversy, no pressure.” Gates believed that controversial intelligence analysis would attract the attention of policymakers, and enable analysts to decipher what kind of intelligence was desired by policymakers. In a speech in 1989, Gates advocated the “aggressive use of intelligence. We in intelligence must think

offensively.... We in intelligence are the shock troops of low-intensity conflict.”

As a result of his pandering to the director, Gates occupied key positions in the 1980s as a deputy director for intelligence (DDI), chairman of the National Intelligence Council (NIC), and ultimately deputy director of the CIA, where he could indulge his fantasies of intelligence advocacy. Nicaragua and Iran-Contra turned out to be the greatest fantasies of all. Gates had his acolytes in the 1980s, and there are still too many CIA intelligence officers who believe that relevance is the key to success. For accommodating Casey, Gates became known as the “windsock.”

Even before Casey came on board in 1981, Gates was named the NIO for the Soviet Union. Soon after Casey arrived, Gates requested a national intelligence estimate (NIE) on Soviet policy in Africa, giving the task to a very malleable analyst, the late Grey Hodnett, who produced an execrable draft estimate. I was the representative of the DI on that estimate, and advised Hodnett and Gates that I would be taking a critical view of the product. The paper was extremely one-sided and gave no attention to the political and economic problems that the Soviets faced on the continent of Africa. Hodnett’s response was typical of those who politicized intelligence. “Your problem isn’t with me,” he responded. “I was just a ‘hired gun’ on this paper.” I asked “who hired you;” he responded, “Bob Gates.”

So I took my problem to Gates, which led to the first of several acrimonious exchanges I had with someone who had been a friend since 1968. A key encounter on the issue of integrity and the intelligence process became a marker in our relations. He bridled over the use of the “I” word (i.e., integrity and not intelligence). I made my points at the coordination meeting for the draft estimate but the final draft was worse than the initial one due to Gates’s interventions. My final exchange with Gates over this issue brought an important rejoinder from the NIO: “This is the paper that Casey wants, and this is the paper that Casey is getting.” There is no better epitaph for Gates’ role at the CIA in the 1980s.

Gates considered Casey “intellectually...the most stimulating man I ever met.” A decade earlier, Secretary of State Kissinger had driven Casey out of the Department of State because he was convinced the old man was senile. Kissinger nailed it; Gates was too easily impressed.

In a matter of months, the deputy director for intelligence, John McMahon, like CIA deputy director Bobby Inman, grew disgusted with Casey’s antics; he retired and moved to California. This opened up the position of DDI to Gates, who had grabbed Casey’s attention with private memoranda that compared the CIA to the Department of Agriculture with an “advanced case of bureaucratic arteriosclerosis.” According to Gates, the halls of the CIA were filled with “plodding mediocrities counting the days until retirement,” which he called the major cause of the “decline in the quality of our intelligence

collection and analysis over the last fifteen years,” the very period that had been a source of some pride to me and others. Like many of my colleagues, I considered the promotion of Gates a potential disaster. He created a toxic environment in the directorate that exceeded my worst fears.

On January 4, 1982, Casey made Gates the DDI and, according to Casey’s biographer, Joseph Persico, “untangled a bureaucratic knot” by making Gates the chief of the NIC as well as the DDI. Persico naively believed that having two different directors for the DDI and the NIC led to “duplication and confusion,” with intelligence analysts in the “classic job hell of trying to serve two masters.” Persico’s uninformed views are typical of outsiders who know little about the DI and rely on the views on insiders such as Gates, the obvious source for these views.

The separation of the DDI, which is responsible for current intelligence, and the NIC, which is responsible for estimative intelligence, guaranteed competition and rivalry between the two disciplines, making it harder to politicize intelligence. Giving both positions to Gates made it easy for him to control

sis as “irrelevant or untimely or unfocused, or all three.” He described analysts as “close-minded, smug and arrogant.” He described their thinking as “flabby and complacent,” lacking tolerance of the views of others. As for their writing, Gates called it “poor and verbose,” and avoiding issues “germane to the United States” and its policymakers. He said the analysis was “often proved inaccurate,” but it was “too fuzzy to judge whether it was even right or wrong.” Many of us were convinced that we were now working on Captain Phillip Queeg’s *USS Caine*.

Many analysts knew Gates was playing an ideological game to suit the interests of Casey and the hard-liners in the Reagan administration, but there were many careerists and company men who had no difficulty hewing his line. Too many supervisors and managers truckled to the new DDI. This worked well for Casey and Gates in support of a Reagan administration that viewed the Soviet Union as an “evil empire.”

The departure of Secretary of State Al Haig from the Reagan administration, and the arrival of Secretary of State George Shultz brought “new thinking” and a new policy on

Life under Casey and Gates became capricious and corrupt. Too many analysts began to write for their new bosses: it was easy to produce intelligence that took a hard-line toward the Soviet Union, the leftist governments in Central America, or the “success” of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan.

the final intelligence product, and that is what Gates did for intelligence in the President’s Daily Brief (PDB); current and premonitory intelligence to the policymaking community; and estimative intelligence to the Departments of State and Defense. Gates was positioned to create the very “job hell” that Persico incorrectly described. Persico was right about one thing, however: “Casey now had the machinery in place.”

Life under Casey and Gates became capricious and corrupt. Too many analysts began to write for their new bosses: it was easy to produce intelligence that took a hard-line toward the Soviet Union, the leftist governments in Central America, or the “success” of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. If you refused to accept these ideological points of view, then you were challenging Gates personally, and thus treated to his *ad hominem* attacks in cover sheets attached to intelligence products. I garnered my share of them.

Soon after becoming DDI, Gates addressed his analysts in the auditorium and declared his new approach to management, the Genghis Khan school of management. Gates had virtually no experience as a manager when he took over the DI; his talk was widely discussed. He described the DI’s analy-

the Soviet Union. As a result, Casey and Gates had to step up their game to resist the *détente* policies of the Department of State. Casey and Gates did their best to subvert the intelligence process in order to defeat the policy initiatives of Shultz and Jack Matlock, a Foreign Service Officer seconded to the NSC. Secretary Shultz and Ambassador Matlock knew that as well.

Gates gave a particularly outrageous speech in January 1987, when he ignored the intelligence assessments of the CIA and relied on disinformation from the Defense Intelligence Agency and the *Washington Times* to make a case for President Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative. Gates argued that SDI was essential to protect the United States from Soviet development of lasers and particle beam weaponry, the stuff of science fiction. Gates stated that the Kremlin was “working to eliminate its own vulnerability and consolidate a unilateral advantage.” Gates moved to the right of the Reagan administration, arguing that abandoning SDI would “preserve Moscow’s monopoly in strategic defense” and mark a “key indicator of a loss of U.S. will to compete militarily.” Shultz was furious, and made his anger known to Gates.

Casey and Gates were never committed to providing objective intelligence on the Soviet Union. Their chief interest was in serving their master, President Reagan, and the attitude on the 7th floor of the CIA building was “the Russians are coming, the Russians are coming.” Casey totally disparaged the work of CIA analysts on the Soviet Union, and Gates devoted himself to reifying Casey’s opinions. The senior leadership of the CIA, particularly in the NIC and the DI, bought the ideological line, but one NIO, John Horton, resigned in 1985 because he would not follow the line that Mexico was ripe for a revolution and vulnerable to the influence of the Soviet Union.

Casey and Gates took hard-line positions on every issue that involved Soviet foreign policy in the Third World and that justified CIA’s covert action. Gates ignored ample evidence that the Soviet Union was retreating from the Third World, which my wife Lyn Ekedahl and I documented in various assessments, and argued that Gorbachev continued the Soviet commitments to Angola, Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. He completely dismissed Gorbachev’s emphasis on détente, arguing that Moscow was merely trying to lock in “Soviet strategic gains of the last generation.”

When it came to the possibility of Soviet basing of MiG aircraft in Nicaragua, he wanted an assessment that argued for deployment, which would have meant ignoring evidence to the contrary. When it came to the possibility of a Soviet retreat from the Third World for which there was sufficient evidence, Gates stopped any assessment that made such an argument. I wrote my first book on the Soviet retreat from the Third World, which surfaced evidence that Gates rebuffed. Ekedahl co-authored a book on the Soviet retreat along with an academic in residence, after Gates killed their paper on the subject.

Gates violated the CIA’s charter against policy advocacy, advocating a bombing campaign in 1984 to “bring down” the leftist government in Nicaragua. In an incendiary memorandum to Casey on December 14, 1984, several weeks after the election of Daniel Ortega to the presidency, Gates argued that the Soviet Union was turning Nicaragua into an armed camp that would become a second Cuba. The rise of the communist-leaning Sandinista government, according to Gates, threatened the stability of Central America. His message echoed the view of the conservatives, who incorrectly predicted a communist takeover of the region.

When there were signs of Soviet interest in withdrawal from Afghanistan, which began to appear within months after Gorbachev’s ascent to power, Gates laughed at our conclusions and lectured us on our naiveté. Some of us made money on this one because Gates and his hand-picked National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for the Soviet Union, Fritz Ermarth, took bets against any Soviet withdrawal. Ekedahl won a bottle of champagne from Ermarth on that

one, although he never paid off. When we showed Gates and Ermarth a copy of Gorbachev’s first major Politburo speech on Soviet policy, which referred to Afghanistan as a “bleeding wound,” they found nothing remarkable about the new Soviet attitude.

Gates played the key role in developing an NIE in May 1985 to justify the ill-fated deals known as Iran-Contra. He was totally dismissive of the congressional investigations of Iran-Contra, calling hearings on the subject as “bureaucratic bullshit” that Casey was determined to evade. Just as flawed and faulty intelligence was used to justify the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, phony intelligence was created two decades earlier to justify arms to a regime that was supporting terrorism (Iran) and to use the profits of the arms sales to illegally fund a counter-revolutionary group in Nicaragua (the Contras).

In 1985, Iran-Contra was in the planning stages at the CIA and the NSC. In order to pursue controversial policies, administration hard-liners wanted intelligence to argue (falsely) that Iran had ended terrorism and that the Contras could overthrow the Sandinista government if given financial and military support. Gates was the intermediary between Graham Fuller, the NIO, and the national security staffer, Howard Teicher, who argued that the Soviet Union was on the verge of improving relations with Iran and that the race between the United States and the Soviet Union “for Tehran was on, and whoever gets there first wins all.” No Soviet analyst at the CIA or the State Department believed this Cold War hyperbole.

It was obtuse to argue on behalf of improved Soviet-Iranian relations in view of the Iranian government’s repression of the communist Tudeh Party; the expulsion of all Soviet economic advisors and numerous Soviet “diplomats” who were KGB officers; and Tehran’s reference to Moscow’s “godless” communist regime as the “Second Satan.” Gates blocked language in the estimate that reflected the views of the Soviet analysts regarding the unlikelihood of a Soviet-Iranian détente and inserted language that concluded Iran had given up terror as an instrument of policy. Gates was wrong and devious on all counts, and he made sure once again that the CIA was wrong analytically so that the White House could pursue weapons sales to Iran to raise money for the Contras.

In order to justify the opening to Iran, the CIA supporters of Iran-Contra such as Casey, Gates, and Fuller, had to argue the opposite. They introduced language that stated Iran’s support for terrorism had diminished; there was a moderate faction in Iran favoring ties with the United States; the Soviets were building up their position in Iran; and Moscow was on the verge of a breakthrough in its relations with Iran as a result of its military assistance. These positions were taken in the spring of 1985 before the first delivery of Hawk surface-to-air missiles to Iran.

The White House also received phony intelligence from

two NIOs, Graham Fuller, a specialist in the Middle East and a former clandestine operative, and Charlie Allen, a controversial CIA careerist who was the NIO for counter-terrorism. Their reporting reified the notion there were moderates in Iran with sufficient political clout who were waiting for a U.S. emissary to improve bilateral ties. Allen briefed the NSC on Iranian politics, although he had no background in this area.

This was a serious violation of intelligence ethics, an effort

In addition to tailoring the intelligence on Nicaragua and Iran, Gates supported the Reagan administration's decision not to inform Congress of the arms shipments going to Iran to gain release of U.S. hostages in Lebanon. Like Helms a decade earlier in the covert action against Salvador Allende, Gates knew that it was politically suicidal not to inform the Congress. Gates had a choice: he could go along with a policy that he knew was wrong or he could keep silent and remain



William Casey and Ronald Reagan. Photo: AP

to provide uncoordinated intelligence to the president of the United States to support a dubious covert action in Iran and Nicaragua. So when President Reagan explained to the nation that he believed he was dealing with a moderate faction in Tehran interested in reopening ties to the United States, he was acting on the basis of CIA analysis. The question that remains unanswered to this day is whether the President was a victim of CIA disinformation. When Gates told the SSCI that he was unaware of any disagreement among intelligence analysts, he was lying. Accurate intelligence could have bolstered policymakers who disagreed with the false sense of urgency regarding Iran-Contra.

on track to become the first intelligence analyst to be named DCI. Gates remained silent; he would not let principles stand in the way of professional advancement.

Casey was engaging in poor trade craft by mingling two covert actions—one regarding Iran; the other dealing with Nicaragua. Gates knew that laws were being broken and the consequences could be disastrous. A government agency was selling surface-to-air missiles to Iran for a profit, violating a federal law against taking profits from one covert action to fund another covert action on behalf of the Contras. Profits had to be turned back to the U.S. Treasury. Gates' silence on these matters cost him the position of DCI in 1987 and have

removed him from consideration for a high-level position in any administration. It could have cost Reagan the presidency.

Casey and Gates worked in tandem on other policy issues where the intelligence wouldn't support Reagan's policies. They distorted intelligence to create a false sense of Soviet manipulation of leftists in Central and South America, and to create a picture of Soviet orchestration of terrorist organizations. Gates argued that Nicaraguan anti-communist forces (the Contras) would collapse within one or two years without U.S. funding, but that "new funding" was insufficient. He wanted to go beyond the tactical operations of Iran-Contra in supplying assistance to the Contras. He advocated that the United States withdraw diplomatic recognition of the Sandinista government, provide overt assistance to a government in exile, impose economic sanctions or a quarantine, and use airstrikes to destroy Nicaragua's "military buildup." The recommendation for the use of airstrikes was unprecedented for a CIA official.

The Reagan administration ignored Gates' recommendations, and none of his predictions panned out. Nicaragua didn't become a communist dictatorship; and the Sandinista regime didn't lead to the fall of U.S.-backed governments in El Salvador, Honduras, or Guatemala. In fact, the Sandinistas and Ortega were voted out of power in 1990, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist a year later.

Before his recommendation to use force against Nicaragua, Gates wrote a paper for Casey that argued for cooperation between the United States and Egypt to work together against Libya to "redraw the map of North Africa." This paper got to deputy national security adviser John Poindexter, who used it to promote a joint U.S.-Egyptian invasion of Libya. Fortunately, saner minds prevailed in the Reagan administration, and Gates was ignored.

Gates was a master at cherry-picking intelligence for ideological reasons to serve Casey's views. Long before I had the opportunity to testify before the Senate intelligence committee, I collected evidence on the false assessment that linked Moscow to the Papal assassination plot in 1981. Casey and Gates' cherry-picked a clandestine report from a third-hand source, a Bulgarian, whose previous information lacked credibility. The DO was not even planning to issue the report or circulate it in any fashion, but Casey—unlike other CIA directors—saw clandestine reporting in its raw form before it was circulated to the intelligence community. The Bulgarian was a member of the GRU—his country's military intelligence—and not related to the work of the KGB. If the Soviets had been involved in the Papal Plot, then it would have been a KGB operation, not GRU. As a result, a third-hand source, a bad source, from the wrong channel got to be the sole source for one of the most dishonest intelligence assessments ever circulated to a president.

Casey wanted an assessment for the White House; Gates saluted and selected three reliable drafters to prepare the

product *en camera*. I found a draft copy of the memorandum on the desk of one of the drafters, took it to the nearest xerox machine; at the CIA no one was far from a xerox. I confronted my boss at the time, Douglas MacEachin, but I got went nowhere as he threw up his hands and said that he had to follow the orders. I knew then I would leave the CIA at the first opportunity.

Gates was a master of "judge shopping in the courthouse." If a court wanted a specific sentence then it knew which judges to assign to a particular case; when Gates wanted a specific intelligence product, he knew which analysts to commission. I told Gates I found the draft document on the desk of one of the co-authors, Kay Oliver, who had a reputation for providing politically correct answers to intelligence questions, and that analysts responsible for international terrorism had not been consulted. In the course of the conversation, I again used the "I" word, "integrity," and his lack of it, which raised Gates' hackles.

Gates could never handle personal confrontation, which is not unusual in the case of bullies; the conversation was tense. His anger was revealed later that night in a call to my home. Several months later, I was removed as the division chief for Soviet policy in the Third World. MacEachin delivered the message, showing me the email from Gates that ordered my removal. Six years later, I found myself in Room 211 of the Hart Senate Office Building, just to the north of the Capitol, to testify against Gates' confirmation as DCI, using the phony "Papal Plot" memorandum as a key document in the case against him. Testifying on behalf of Gates was MacEachin, who falsely testified that it was his idea to remove me as a division chief.

In his memoir on his Agency years, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War*, Gates described me as "one of his oldest friends in the Agency," although our friendship had virtually ended several years before his appointment to run the DI. In his typically self-serving way, he wrote that he was "stunned and sickened" by my testimony against him because I had never "come to [him] to express concern or disagreement." He took credit for promoting me and "certainly had no sense he bore me ill will." Well, Bob has an excellent memory, but he forgot our encounters over the issue of integrity, and that he removed me as chief of the Soviet-Third World branch for arguing that the new Soviet president, Gorbachev, was reducing Moscow's presence in the Third World to improve bilateral relations with the United States. This view challenged the ideology of the Reagan Administration.

Gates has used three memoirs to launder his credentials, referring to the fact that he "witnessed" the Iran-Contra disaster in 1986-1987. In fact, he had to withdraw from the confirmation process for DCI in 1987 because the intelligence committee didn't believe his denials of prior knowledge. Three of my former CIA colleagues, including Gates' deputy,

Dick Kerr, had briefed him on the sale of missiles to Iran and the diversion of profits to the Contras. The “case officer” for Iran-Contra, Marine Colonel Oliver North, briefed Gates on the Swiss bank accounts where the money for the Contras had been kept. Senator David Boren even called Lawrence Walsh, the independent counsel investigating Iran-Contra, to ascertain whether Gates would be indicted. Walsh “doubted Gates’ veracity,” but said he would “probably not” be indicted. He warned Boren, however, that there were still troubling areas suggesting Gates had falsely denied knowledge of North’s Contra-support activities.

The issue that turned back Gates’ nomination in 1987—Iran-Contra—was the issue that should have been vetted in 1991 and could have led to the inability to confirm Gates as DCI. Various investigations of Iran-Contra overlooked the most manipulative aspect of Gates’ role in the scandal, the preparation of a memorandum to the president of the United States under the signature of the DCI, calling for support for arms deliveries to Iran. Gates, who pretended to be an innocent bystander in the Iran-Contra crisis, was actually on center stage at an important decision-making juncture.

Gates was wrong about every major intelligence issue in the 1980s particularly the central issues dealing with Soviet-American relations and Mikhail Gorbachev. He refused to recognize Gorbachev as a reformer, and he was among the first to argue that he would be ousted by neo-Stalinists. In saying so in the *Washington Times*, Gates dismissed the possibility that Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin were reformers.

This is not ancient history. Indeed, it would be wrong and even cynical to believe that my fight with Gates that began in the mid-1980s should be discontinued in the twenty-first century. U.S. policymakers, including Secretary of State George Shultz, were poorly served in the Reagan administration when Gates tailored intelligence to block efforts to improve relations with the Soviet Union. Shultz concluded that the “CIA’s intelligence was in many cases simply Casey’s ideology.” Gates made similar efforts to block Secretary of State James Baker’s efforts to improve relations with Moscow. President Obama wasn’t helped by the opposition of the professional military that was encouraged by his secretary of defense.

All Americans, moreover, were poorly served in the 1980s when the defense budget was unnecessarily doubled because of a politicized image of a Soviet Union that was on its last legs. Two decades later, the United States invaded Iraq on the basis of false intelligence provided by the CIA; in some cases, it was provided by former acolytes of Gates such as CIA deputy director John McLaughlin.

Gates’ battle was not with one or two analysts who happened to get it right, but with a number of “people who looked at all the available evidence, without much bias one

way or another, and who had been to the USSR and witnessed its hollow political and social structure, seeing not an omnipotent superpower but a clumsy, oafish regime often stumbling over its own feet.” If the Senate intelligence committee had followed up warnings regarding politicization that it received in the mid-1980s, and had rejected the Gates’ nomination in 1991 as it was prepared to do in 1987, then it would have been more difficult to politicize intelligence in the run-up to the Iraq War. Senators should have been more zealous in examining false CIA intelligence.

Several years after the 1991 hearings, I received an authoritative endorsement of my testimony against Gates from former Secretary of State George Shultz. Shultz, one of the most formidable public figures of contemporary times, produced a memoir that confirmed my charges of politicization. Shultz was known to the Washington community as tight-lipped and discrete, and his memoir recorded his numerous fights with neoconservatives at the NSC and the Pentagon, and his cold fury at the CIA that he knew to be incompetent and out of control under Casey and Gates. If Shultz had expressed these views during the hearings as he was asked to do, then his remarks could have been a game changer in the committee’s vote.

In his memoir, Shultz recited his remarks to Gates when Gates became acting DCI. “I wouldn’t trust anything you guys said about Iran no matter what. I feel you try to manipulate me. The DCI should not be part of the policy process,” which is exactly what President Truman had intended in the National Security Act of 1947. In addition to Iran, Shultz made it clear that the CIA could not be trusted on Central America, Southern Africa, Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union, the regions and countries I cited in my testimony. If only he had opposed the nomination of Gates.

Shultz charged Gates with “manipulating” him and reminded the former Soviet analyst that he was “usually wrong” about Moscow, having dismissed Gorbachev’s policies as “just another Soviet attempt to deceive us.” He accused Casey of providing “bum dope” to the president. “When it became evident that the Soviet Union was, in fact, changing,” Shultz wrote, “the CIA line was changes wouldn’t really make a difference.” Shultz was, of course, spot-on; Casey and Gates were using assessments to pander to Reagan’s ideologues and to build support for aggressive policies.

Shultz understood Gates’ game, which was to dismiss the emergence of policy change under Gorbachev as “just talk;” that the Soviet Union was a “powerfully entrenched and largely successful system that was incapable of change;” and that Gorbachev would fail. When the changes took place, the “CIA line was that the changes wouldn’t really make a difference.” This is the most authoritative description you will find of the role of Casey and Gates in the mid-1980s, loyally assisted by such intelligence apparatchiks as Doug MacEachin, George Kolt, Larry Gershwin, Kay Oliver, and Grey Hodnett.

Shultz's message to Gates was lapidary: "I don't have any confidence in the intelligence community. I feel you all have very strong policy views. So you have a very dissatisfied customer. If this were a business, I'd find myself another supplier. I feel bad about my state of mind, as I have historically been a supporter of the agency. Now I feel that the CIA is an alternative State Department with its own strong policy views. I want to have my confidence rebuilt. The DCI should not be part of the policy process; heavy involvement just can't help but influence you. In the policy business you develop a bias. The CIA should be objective, and if it is not, that means what you say must be discounted."

Ideological differences can block objective and balanced intelligence. It is up to the intelligence professional to find ways to avoid ideology and to fight politicization. My dispute and falling out with Gates was not personal; it was a battle between the need for objective and balanced intelligence analysis vs. politicized and ideological rendering of evidence. **CP**

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Holland's Climate Crisis, and Ours

BY DAVE LINDORFF

Amsterdam. Republican lawmakers like Sens. John Barrasso (R-WY) and James Inhofe (R-OK), who are hoping to derail or obstruct this the recently concluded Paris Climate Summit by blocking funding for any US promises and commitments, ought to take a trip to Holland. Standing beside a canal like the picturesque Kaisergracht, one of this ancient city's network of canals, tends to concentrate one's mind. Peer down at its still, murky water and realize that the cobblestones under one's feet, some two meters above the waterway, lie a good five meters below sea level (the canal's surface itself is seven meters feet below sea level). Then gaze upward at the 16th and 17th-century buildings lining either side of the waterway and imagine seawater lapping midway up the tall windows of the high-ceilinged second-story rooms, as it would do if a major dike or levee were to fail.

A remarkable system of dike works, levees, storm-surge barriers, polders, canals and pumping stations, begun around the time of the Romans, has kept the North Sea at bay in this improbable underwater land for centuries, with the exception

of the occasional catastrophic breach would drown hundreds of thousands. But there is now a clear understanding here that this precarious centuries-old standoff with the oceans can't last.

Recently, the Dutch government contracted with a group of climatologists, hydraulic engineers and other experts and tasked them with developing a way to protect the country from rising seas caused by climate change for the next two centuries. Why just 200 years? Because it's understood that it will probably not be possible to guarantee anything further out than that.

There is no serious argument among the Dutch about whether climate change is happening, and no words are wasted in the country's parliament arguing over whether that change is "human caused" or is part of some imagined "natural solar cycle." In Holland, 60 percent of which is already situated below sea level, global warming is recognized as an existential threat which, if not immediately addressed, could erase much of the country and its 17 million inhabitants in a fairly short time.

Matthijs Kok, a professor at the Technical University at Delft, and Jan Stijnen, a senior consultant for risk and safety with HV Consultants, in their office in the city of Lelystad (the last city to be constructed in Holland on reclaimed land from the Zeidersee), are part of the team developing that 200-year national defense plan. They explain that the government has approved a long-term program to finance improvements that are supposed to upgrade and enhance the dike and pumping system and offer protection against a one-in-1,000-year flooding event even as seas rise substantially. Their work is premised upon "worst-case" estimates for sea-level rise as projected by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which means an 85-centimeter increase by 2100, and a three-meter rise by 2200. (By way of contrast, the goal of improvements underway in the levy system around New Orleans is to protect the city against a once-in-a-century flood, with little thought being given to rising sea level over that period.)

"If we do this with predictable funding each year and follow a long-term strategy, it's not expensive," says Kok, estimating the added cost of improvements and upgrading of defenses at about 0.2% of the little country's \$870-billion annual GDP, or about \$1.75 billion. "But you have to allocate and spend that funding every year," he adds. "You can't let up." (A similar amount spent annually to protect U.S. towns and cities from climate-caused flooding would be close to \$40 billion.)

With that money, much work will be undertaken in Holland. Substandard dikes, such as those that were constructed years ago using poor soil or even peat, will be replaced. Other dikes will be raised. Levees along major rivers like the Rhine and the Mosel, which course through the country at roughly sea-level like gigantic liquid el trains

running into the North Sea, will also be raised and strengthened (this is an urgent need because both major rivers are experiencing increasing flooding due to melting alpine glaciers and increased climate-change-related storm rainfall upstream). As well, the dunes that protect the country against the North Sea's raging storms and pounding swells along the northern portion of the coastline will be enhanced and extended much farther out to sea.

"It could get more challenging if the sea rises more than predicted," concedes Stijnen. "We have all these villages and cities along the rivers, and to raise the dikes, you have to broaden them at the base too by the same percentage, and thus by multiple times any increase in height, which means eliminating a lot of expensive real estate."

Even so, he explains, because the value of property in Holland has soared by a factor of 10 or more since the last deadly dike failure in 1953, the actuarial losses that would be suffered if the country were inundated are "astronomical."

defend New Orleans. And what's the likelihood that taxpayers in Nebraska, Kansas or Oklahoma would want to fund major projects to protect southern Florida, coastal Virginia or Brooklyn and lower Manhattan from being inundated by rising seas? Just remember President Gerald Ford's denial of federal aid to a financially teetering New York City, which led to the famous 1975 New York Post headline: "Ford to City: Drop Dead!" Or more to the point at hand, recall the lackadaisical response to the deadly post-Katrina flooding of New Orleans.

But even if the Netherlands may be one of the most forward-thinking nations in the world in terms of recognizing the seriousness of the global climate crisis, and in taking action to defend against it, there are problems with the Dutch plan. The biggest one is that the government and its scientists may be actually far too optimistic in their estimates of the risks and the challenge they are facing. Many climate scientists note that the IPCC has routinely seen its projections for

"Why has Holland made the decision to spend what is necessary to defend its territories against rising seas, while the US political system remains mired in an absurd fight over the reality of climate change?"

That of course makes the costs of protecting against those losses seem "eminently reasonable" in comparison.

Why, one might ask, has Holland made the political decision to stand and fight, and the budget decision to spend what is necessary to defend its territory against rising seas, while the U.S. political system remains mired in an absurd fight over the reality of climate change, with some governments, such as the North Carolina legislature, actually barring coastal towns from drawing up zoning and building codes based on any assumption that the ocean is rising? Even New Orleans, which already experienced the devastating flood from Hurricane Katrina in 2006, and New York City, which got a preview of what is coming with Hurricane Sandy in 2012, have done little to improve their chances should another such storm, or perhaps a worse one, strike either city in coming years.

One reason, suggests Stijnen, could be that the majority of the Dutch population already lives well below sea level. Moreover, the fate of the entire nation depends on keeping the country from flooding, not least because most economic activity is also located below sea level. Stijnen attributes American inaction and political stasis concerning climate change to what he sees as a more regional view of the threat in the U.S., where most states don't even have a seacoast. He has a point. We've already seen pushback in Congress against funding larger scale flood works to better

future temperature and sea-level rises overtaken by reality, almost as soon as they're made. Greenland's ice sheet keeps showing researchers that ice melts much differently—and more rapidly—than they had assumed. We've learned lately, for example, about unanticipated deep fracturing, the creation of short-lived surface lakes in summer, "lenses" of ice that form just under each new year's snowfall that prevent surface melt from sinking down and refreezing, and also a constantly worsening albedo, as ever more ash and soot from centuries or millennia past is exposed with each year's surface melt. Prof. Harold Wanless, chair of the geology department at the University of Florida, warns that the rate of melting on Greenland alone has been doubling every seven years. He, and many others, think seas could rise by three to five meters or more by this century's end, not just by 85 cm., with even more rising to come in the following century—much of that rise because of what's happening already on Greenland. And that doesn't even count future melting of Antarctica's huge ice sheet.

Both Kok and Stijnen agree that their and the IPCC's assumptions about sea-level and temperature rises could prove far too low, and they say that if such grim projections prove true and the earth keeps warming, at some point the Dutch people will have to give their country up and retreat inland, as the land's first hunter-gatherer inhabitants did when the

glaciers melted at the end of the last Ice Age and sea levels rose by two meters per century. In that case they'd become refugees, much like the Syrians who are currently flooding into Holland and other European countries, fleeing a different kind of tide.

When that happens, the Dutch will at least have tried to save their country.

What can we say of the US, where vast coastal regions like the Chesapeake Bay, the Outer Banks, southern Florida, the Gulf Coast, and much of the San Francisco Bay area, as well as huge coastal metropolises like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, Miami, New Orleans, Houston, San Diego and Seattle, are doing next to nothing to prepare for the coming flood, and where most people, according to polls, are just shrugging their shoulders about climate change? **CP**

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Populists United

The Architecture of a Successful Left-Right Electoral Strategy

BY SAM HUSSEINI

As best as I can determine, the arch was invented in Mesopotamia around 2000 BC. It might therefore be fitting that a political analogue of the arch may help bring a measure of peace to present day Iraq—and much else.

The arch is of two halves—the left and the right—each leaning upon the other to make the whole. Each half depends on its opposite for its own structural integrity. Should either weaken, both would collapse into rubble and dust.

This was part of my inspiration for creating VotePact.org—a voting strategy with people from the left pairing up with those of the right to back an anti-establishment candidate. Thus, they would no longer cancel out each other—one voting Democrat and the other Republican. Instead they would siphon votes in pairs to independent and third party campaigns, opening the door to actual electoral victory for a candidate skillful enough to gain support from both.

Learning from the arch, the voters would lean upon each other—and thus protect themselves from the inevitable “spoiler” arguments. Lefties could not be accused of helping the Republican candidate; rightwingers could not be accused

of helping the Democrat.

And so, we'd learn to build.

We are, as I write, seeing large insurgencies from the left and right, for the time being, inside the Democratic and Republican parties. Both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump have appealed to populist sentiments of the electorate, have filled up stadiums and they both overwhelmingly won the first primary of this election. One of these insurgencies may win the White House—or they may both melt away in a short time, leaving behind little trace of their uprisings.

Sanders and Trump are both politicians and in different ways have been parts of the establishment. They both have faults and contradictions that have at times been rightly criticized. But they also represent the current manifestation of the long-standing trend of populism that may emerge from the left or right. To date, this trend has materialized in ad hoc fashion. That will no longer do. People of the left and right need to come together. At minimum to dialogue, but more dangerously, perhaps, to vote.

Several things might happen in this election cycle. Among the possibilities: Trump and Sanders may both get the nominations they seek. This may be an ironic victory: the establishment will relish Sander and Trump supporters at each other's throats. It will be an electoral manifestation of MSNBC and Fox News enticing their views to battle against each other: Let's you and him fight.

Of course, it may prove a genuine threat to the establishment if either were to gain the White House. Enter Michael Bloomberg. Billionaire Bloomberg has indicated he would run as an independent if Sanders and Trump were the nominees. This would mean Bloomberg would in effect be running a VotePact campaign in reverse—a perverse inverse of my initial vision. He'd attempt to re-constitute the establishment with a centrist party, somewhat akin to the role Kadima played in Israel. He may even win endorsements in pairs as I've envisioned for VotePact.

If Bloomberg runs and succeeds, the bases might finally control the Democratic and Republican parties to an extent, but Bloomberg could be the savior of the establishment.

But if Sanders and Trump were to both lose (especially assuming Sanders doesn't end up as Clinton's VP nominee), their supporters and others looking for meaningful change will be at a loss. Do they swallow their pride and vote for the thoroughly establishment candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties?

This possibility would in fact provide an enormous—possibly the largest ever—opportunity for a campaign to appeal to the radical center: A Populists United campaign garnishing support from the left and right; especially from former Sanders supporters and former Trump (and Carson et al) supporters.

This left-right alignment is not new of course. As the U.S. was set to first bomb Iraq 25 years ago, members of the establishment derided a “McGovern-Buchanan axis” opposed to

such a course. But it's finally manifesting itself in the electoral arena as it never has in my lifetime. And it's doing so—critically—in roughly equal measure on each side.

Nor is this left-right alignment limited in issues. At times they manifest in different ways with different segments from the left and right, but some are clear:

- Anti-NAFTA, TPP, China PNTR and other corporate trade deals.
- Anti-Wall Street bailouts and “too big to fail.”
- Against “common core,” “no child left behind” and other aspects of the corporatization of education. Similarly, stopped the commercialization of childhood has strong appeal on both the left and right.

There's much on foreign policy: Though Sanders has shied away from foreign policy and it was never his strong suit; and Trump has forcefully attacked lies leading to the invasion of Iraq. There is a clear left-right alliance against intervention: The U.S. should be a republic, not an empire. Similarly, on

But going to the root economic and military policies, many of the disagreements that appear so contentious between the left and right may melt away.

[Even on the issue of abortion, a functioning unity of left and right can bring us to a better place. Right now, the term “pro-life” is largely meaningless given the commitment to violence of U.S. foreign policy as well as the priority of profits over people endemic to economic policy. If those were to be addressed, a conversation on abortion and what it means to be “pro-life” might make more sense. When Sanders spoke to Liberty University, founded by Jerry Falwell, last year, the biggest applause of the event was a question about abortion. Sanders was addressing economic inequality of course and when abortion was raised, Sanders simply side stepped it. But that's not an honest dialogue. An honest dialogue is to talk about the value of life and the fact that the U.S. government regularly bomb and kills people, ripping apart their limbs and guts. Sanders didn't go there and so, he might have gained points for showing up to Liberty University, but he didn't in

Immigration of Mexicans and other Latinos in the U.S. is largely a function of NAFTA and other trade policies, as well as the drug war — which are backed by the political establishment.

civil liberties, against NSA mass surveillance, use of secret “evidence,” etc. One can track issues back in common by Dennis Kucinich and Ron Paul—no more massive spending on the military, with 800 U.S. bases around the world.

Furthermore, some issues that the left and right polarize most on can be seen as symptomatic issues, while they actually agree on the underlying causal issues. Some recent examples: The destabilization of Syria—as well as Iraq and Libya—fostered by U.S. policy in the Mideast has resulted in devastation of those countries and in millions fleeing as refugees. Trump made headlines when he proposed a ban (temporarily at least) on Muslim refugees. But Trump and many anti-interventionists on the right, including Rand Paul, have been critical of the U.S.'s destabilization of Iraq and Syria. If the U.S. stopped destabilizing countries like Syria, there might not be millions of desperate refugees fleeing from them and no need to fight about that issue.

Similarly, immigration of Mexicans and other Latinos in the U.S. is largely a function of NAFTA and other trade policies, as well as the drug war—which are backed by the political establishment. Trade and other neoliberal policies have forced millions of Mexican farmers from their land the last two decades and has largely fueled desperate Mexican immigration with workers willing to risk their lives to come to the U.S. to do the most menial of labor for a pittance.

all likelihood change any hearts about what it means to be “pro-life”—because he refuses articulate the levels of terror and violence at the heart of U.S. foreign policy.]

Other issues that seem intractable, like global warming could be dealt with by actually looking at concrete policy rather than focusing only on whether one professes a belief in global warming. Lots of establishment politicians say they believe in global warming and don't adopt policies that would seem to follow given the threats that stance adheres to. There are rightwingers who say they don't believe in global warming, but they oppose fossil fuel subsidies and may still get behind a carbon tax. Such specific policies should be focused on rather than rhetoric that may end up leaving environmentalists with very little.

People pairing up to vote for their preferred anti-establishment candidates should be done without illusions. There will be serious disagreements. Pretending otherwise is a setup for failure. There have been attempts at left-right dialogue before—Come Home America for example. I wasn't involved much with that, but such efforts have to my knowledge always had a critical flaw: There was no electoral strategy. There's a real cognitive dissonance that comes from “activism” in one direction and voting in another.

It's the promise of overcoming that cognitive dissonance which makes VotePact important. It's part of the reason why

movements—like the anti-war movement in the 2000s diminished: People focused on the 2004 and 2008 elections. The movements, such as they were, were abandoned to get behind Democratic candidates with at best incredibly thin anti-war credentials. Similarly, participation in Occupy from the left and the Tea Party from the right dwindled in the lead up to the 2012 election. Electoral politics has been used to winnow down dialogue, focusing insistently on the frequently marginal difference between the establishment candidates.

Now, Trump and Sanders have deviated from that, largely because the internal contradictions of the establishment have become so deep. But also because that's been a function of other candidates in the primaries. Dennis Kucinich on the left and Ron Paul and Pat Buchanan on the right have voiced substantial critiques of the establishment in the past. But thus far, such campaigns have ended as “sheepdogging” for the establishment: They end up drawing people in with the promise of real change, so they get sucked into establishment party politics only to ensure that they eventually get behind the designated establishment candidate in the end.

And so it might be with Trump and Sanders. All the energy they are generating now by truth telling through the major media could end up having the effect of them getting behind Rubio and Clinton come convention time.

Some folks avoid the cognitive dissonance by simply not voting, or arguing that it's a relatively minor component of activism and not strategizing over it in any meaningful way. I certainly respect those views, but the fact of the matter is that the media and the public do pay a lot of attention to the presidential election and if a strategy is at hand to use that to build, why not build?

And if Trump or Sanders do win, a variation of left-right alliance will still be important. Should their be a President Sanders, he will need to forge left-right alliances to get things done. It's true, as many of his establishment critics have said, that much of what Sanders says he wants is not going to get passed in a Republican majority. But much of what Sanders says he wants has commonality with the right.

Sanders himself helped lead the charge to audit the Fed in congress in 2010 and has shown to be quite welcoming of left-right alliances on numerous issues. Thus, were he to win the presidency, one could see him regularly forging alliances between the left and right against the establishment center.

As it is, thus far, the establishments of the Democratic and Republican parties have turned voters into prisoners. Using fear of “the other” party, people have continued to vote for establishment politicians no matter how bad their policies. Or, they've just checked out of the process.

Third party candidates, Greens, Libertarians, Constitution Party, socialist parties stay at the margins—despite getting on ballots and having platforms that many agree with—in large part because they don't have a strategy to deal with the elephant in the room: the “spoiler” problem.

This enormous problem largely prevents people who might agree with a candidate to not even consider voting for them. Even more, at times, candidacies that are perceived as being a “spoiler” will be viciously attacked by people who totally agree with them on the issues. This was the case for Ralph Nader's 2004 campaign. Some progressives undermined that candidacy, presumably to prevent the Republican candidate from gaining the White House.

In fairness, Ralph Nader—despite an incredible opportunity to unite the left and right—never laid out a route to electoral victory. He didn't meaningfully adopt a VotePact strategy. He basically positioned himself to the left of the Democratic candidates and attempted to push them in that direction. The results were rather predictable.

VotePact provides the blueprint to solve that problem. The idea is that the campaign would not come from the left or right. Any time that has been attempted, it has been confined to the margins.

In order to construct a winning campaign, one must build outwards from the radical center. Gain endorsements in pairs: A retired union official with a small business owner. Corporate trade deals—backed by both the Democratic and Republican candidates—killed the plant where they both worked. Now, they're working together to stop their shared nemesis. They state their reasons at a rally backing the campaign. Others are drawn to their example to find someone in their own life that they trust to be their “vote buddy”—to end the corporate giveaway shenanigans in trade deals and Wall Street bailouts. A local news story is generated.

A life-long Republican veteran is fed up with the wars, so he joins with a peace activist he is related to. They used to beat each other over the head about the issues they disagree about, especially social issues. They don't do that any more. They still respectfully disagree at times, but they don't trigger each other. Instead, they join together to end the perpetual war party. All the people in their lives see this and it makes them think about who they could pair up with. People share this on social media. People pair up and co-write articles about why they—populists coming together to end the dominance of the establishment—will be voting for anti-establishment candidate(s) this year.

In family events across the U.S., the subject is raised: Could Steve and Marge stop bickering about who is more hypocritical—the Democratic nominee or the Republican nominee? Could they articulate the basis of their disagreements and agreements and conclude that they would both be better off if they both voted for an anti-establishment candidate?

The architecture of electoral victory from a left-right alliance is Elves and Dwarves fighting Mordor. They don't even need to like each other to realize that if they don't work together, they will both perish. They do need to trust each other about how the other will vote, or set up a mechanism, like absentee ballots that verifies their votes to each other. Though,

in the end, the process of working together—if done carefully and with integrity, could end up forming meaningful bonds and changing hearts.

There's irony in that the Green and Libertarian party engage in debates each election season, pushed to the margins, and talk about how they actually agree on many issues. It's theoretically possible of course that people who run for president and such over and over again might some day strike fire. But the obstacles are obvious and I've yet to see a meaningful strategy for victory from any third party candidate.

An additional benefit of the VotePact strategy is that even if it does not “take off”—it constitutes leverage. It gives the electorate “some where to go” without tripping over the “spoiler” question. And it fosters dialogue between the participants, creating a healthier culture, as well as setting an example for others that people from the left and right—even a few—can work together.

The capstone for VotePact—both most and least important—is the candidates. What's the mechanism in this election cycle of tapping into the populist sentiment in the electorate in the general election; especially if the more establishment candidates gain the nominations of the Democratic and Republican parties.

One could envision a notable leftwinger and notable rightwinger running together. One obvious pair is former Congressmen Dennis Kucinich and Ron Paul. They would campaign jointly on the issues that they agree on, largely the ones listed above. That would be a political program—with specific goals over four to eight years. Or, there may be other possible candidates. While Ralph Nader had appeal on both the left and right, he didn't use it effectively. But there may be other people who could, for example Coleen Rowley, the 9/11 whistleblower who was named a “Person of the Year” by TIME magazine in 2003. She has articulated a series of policy positions, especially on national security, that align with an anti-establishment center. Another possibility is joint coordination between existing third parties, such as the Greens and Libertarians.

There are clearly differences between these pairings. But many of them are on the level of symbolism: to what extent do you appeal to nationalism or sovereignty for example.

But should the populist moment be captured now, the opportunities are staggering. Imagine four to eight years of a such a Populist United presidency. The issues of rule of law, foreign policy, trade policy, finance, civil liberties, corporate welfare, internet policy, education and more redone, hammered out through difficult but honest discourse between principled progressives and conscientious conservatives—and the current corrupt establishment displaced.

It would be very difficult, filled with tension, but, as with the arch that leans upon itself, such a joining together would provide us with a path out of our seemingly permanent

prison of the establishment duopoly; an opening that we may walk through together into a new day. **CP**

SAM HUSSEINI is founder of the website VotePact.org.

Abuela From Hell: Hillary and Honduras

BY NICK ALEXANDROV



Republic Steel. Photo: IDEM.

The cops chucked her from the truck. “Now, bitch,” one snarled, “you're going to see what happens to you for being where you shouldn't be.” He and three more officers raped her. One forced his baton into her, abusing her unconscious. Irma Villanueva, 25, mother of four, told this story through tears to a Jesuit-run Honduran radio station. She could not go to the police.

They had abducted her in Choloma on August 14, 2009. She was there for a march, one of many protesting President Manuel Zelaya's overthrow and forced exile the June before. Four School of the Americas alumni helmed the coup. Another graduate involved, a top military lawyer, admitted the act was “a crime.” Honduran activists—the Center for Women's Rights, Feminists in Resistance, the Visitación Padilla Women's Movement for Peace—condemn it for launching a new era of militarism, a surge in attacks on women. Hillary Clinton, as Secretary of State, was one of its key backers.

In *Hard Choices*, her 2014 memoir, she claims the coup stemmed from “fears that [Zelaya] was preparing to circumvent the Constitution and extend his term in office.” These charges were nonsense, as she knew. Five days before the ouster, U.S. Ambassador Hugo Llorens wrote her from Tegucigalpa. “The fact is we have no hard intelligence suggesting any consideration”—let alone effort—“by Zelaya or any members of his government to usurp democracy and

suspend constitutional rule,” he conceded. Zelaya’s public approval, Llorens added, was “in the 55 percent range.” Obama could only dream of such support.

But legitimating the Honduran army’s takeover was an easy call for Hillary. Two days after the military stormed Zelaya’s home at 5:20 AM, seized him, and then flew him to Costa Rica, she was “holding off on formally branding it a coup.” The line between this toppling of an elected leader, and regular government procedure, was fine indeed.

And her e-mails reveal that she moved talks on Zelaya’s future from the Organization of American States (OAS) to Costa Rica, a better site for his enemies. Alexander Main writes that she thus succeeded in “keeping Zelaya out of office for the rest of his constitutional mandate,” part of the rich experience she could tap if elected.

As Hillary padded her diplomatic résumé, her Honduran sisters faced an increasingly grim reality. When Zelaya, in July 2009, made a brief, symbolic return home by crossing the Nicaraguan border, thousands traveled to welcome him. Officials stopped one group of women—adults and minors—in Danlí. They groped their captives’ vaginas in the ensuing detention, forcing two to disrobe. Other women held for questioning recount how, as they menstruated, security forces forbade them from using the restroom.

Then on October 16, radio programs hosted by the Center for Women’s Studies, the Center for Women’s Rights, and the Visitación Padilla Women’s Movement for Peace were all canceled. The Honduran government banned the morning-after pill a few weeks later. One analyst wrote that “Secretary Clinton should seriously explore these rights violations before blessing the results of the upcoming Honduran election.” But Hillary leaned in for the benediction.

The presidential contest happened November 29, 2009. “Voters will have a choice of two candidates: the coup supporter Porfirio Lobo or the coup supporter Elvin Santos,” Calvin Tucker explained in the *Guardian*. “Trade unions and social movements calling for a boycott of the election are facing mafia-style threats,” he added, noting that, in the five months after Zelaya’s ouster, “4,000 people have been arrested, hundreds beaten and hospitalized and dozens charged with sedition.” The election was one “that neither the OAS nor the European Union would observe and that the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa maintained was unconstitutional,” Latin America specialist Julia Buxton noted. But Hillary’s razor-sharp mind cut through this pile of evidence. She maintained that the new leader, Porfirio Lobo, was “democratically elected.”

His ascent signaled darkening futures for Honduran women. Karen Yesenia Mondragón, a 29-year-old teacher and anti-coup activist, was parked in front of a Tegucigalpa grocery store on December 14. Her nine-year-old son Raúl was with her. Suddenly two men approached. Raúl escaped, but as he fled heard a gunshot echo down the street. Back in

the car, blood drained from his mother’s left temple. She died four days later at the Hospital Escuela.

Janeth Lourdes Marroquín, a doctor, lived in Comayagua with her husband and two children—one three years old, the other nine months. She was known to treat victims of state repression. As the family sat down to eat the evening of New Year’s Day, 2010, a posse of armed men crept through the garden, breaking through a door and into the house. The assailants shot the couple dead. The police, upon arrival, found the infant lying in a pool of his parents’ blood.

Claudia Larissa Brizuela was 36, active in anti-coup resistance, the mother of two-year-old Said Meléndez and eight-year-old Eduard Moran. She was home in San Pedro Sula, the city where 3,000 girls aged 12-17 roam as prostitutes, the afternoon of February 24. It was 2:00 PM. There was a knock on the door. The men outside fired the moment she answered, hitting her in the arm, neck and forehead. She collapsed dead before her sons.

Hillary toured Central America the following week, in early March 2010. “We support the work that President Lobo is doing,” she proclaimed. The *New York Times* reported “that the United States was restoring more than \$30 million in aid to Honduras it had suspended after the coup.”

That same month, gunmen entered the grounds of a high school where Manuel Flores, a resistance member, taught social sciences. The assassins spotted him on a terrace and shot him dead. In June, two men on a motorcycle abducted his colleague, an activist-writer. One pressed his gun to her temple, called her “trash,” a “fucking bitch,” warned they would kill her as they had Manuel if she continued protesting. They beat her with an ice pick, ripped her clothes, bound her hands and feet, taped her mouth, and before they left threatened again to murder her.

Hillary’s pleas grew more desperate around this time. She begged “Latin American countries to welcome Honduras back into their circle,” Mark Landler wrote in the *New York Times*. U.S. legislators made their own appeals to Hillary in 2012. On March 5, Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and six colleagues wrote in concern, citing “a sustained pattern of violence and threats against journalists, human rights defenders,” and others that seemed “linked to state security forces.” Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and 93 other House members sent a similar letter four days later. But neither these appeals, nor reports of Honduran police affiliation with death squads, could stanch the flow of U.S. aid. Hillary’s State Department stuffed millions of taxpayer dollars into the killers’ pockets.

You can guess the results. “One woman is killed every 18 hours,” Oxfam reported in November 2012. The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Rashida Manjoo, estimates “a 95 percent impunity rate for sexual violence and femicide” in Honduras. The Violence Observatory at the National Autonomous University totaled 363 killings of women in 2009, 385 in 2010, 512 in 2011, 606 in 2012, and 636

in 2013. “It’s almost like there’s a carte blanche for the assassination of women,” argues Carolina Sierra, Women’s Forum for Life spokeswoman, citing the 2009 coup as the start of the current nightmare.

So when Madeleine Albright, champion of genocidal Iraq sanctions, suggests women voting against Hillary will burn in “a special place in hell,” one wonders: How would this abyss compare with the Honduran inferno Hillary stoked? **CP**

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Science Fiction and Radical Politics

An Interview with Kim Stanley Robinson

BY JAVIER SETHNESS CASTRO

Winner of the Hugo, Nebula, and Locus awards, Kim Stanley Robinson is the author of more than twenty books, including the Mars trilogy, *Forty Signs of Rain*, *The Years of Rice and Salt*, *2312*, and *Aurora*. He works with the Sierra Nevada Research Institute and lives in Davis, California.

JAVIER SETHNESS CASTRO: Stan, thank you kindly for taking the time to converse with me about the politics and philosophy of your books. This is a great honor. I would like to begin with a question about your political views. You have spoken twice at the San Francisco/Bay Area Anarchist Bookfair over the past decade, though in your latest address (2013), you described yourself as a social democrat rather than a socialist or anarchist. Nonetheless, a libertarian-communist spirit clearly pervades your books, whether we consider just the passing references to the Martian settlements named for Ernst Bloch’s *Prinzip Hoffnung* (The Principle of Hope) in *Red Mars* (1993) or, indeed, the very denouement of that book, which sees the emergence of mass-resistance among the settlers of the red planet inspired by the anarchist Arkady Bogdanov, whose followers engage in insurrection against the Earth-based capitalists, thus allowing for the blossoming of the libertarian socialism we see in *Green* (1994) and *Blue Mars* (1996). A similarly revolutionary image comes during the Travancori Ascendance, the “Age of Great Progress,” in *The Years of Rice and Salt* (2002), which sees the Travancori League led by the Buddhist figure of the Kerala rise up employing the superior technology it had developed through the application of reason to defeat the Ottoman sultan in the year which corresponds to 1789 CE, the beginning of the French Revolution

in our world. Moreover, in *2312* (2012), you envision a terraformed, settled Mars breaking away from the Earth-based capitalist system during the “Accelerando” phase-change two centuries from now, instituting a syndicalist society—called “areological”—while the Mondragón cooperative model becomes increasingly popular, as mathematized by quantum computers, once humanity comes to colonize other regions of the solar system. Can you describe your political philosophy for our readers?

KIM STANLEY ROBINSON: No, not very well. My novels express my political philosophies, such as they are. For myself, my political feelings are vague and unremarkable. I think it’s best to say I’m an American leftist. All sorts of leftist political ideas and parties appeal to me one way or another, from the Democratic party to communism, and I’m proud of the progress that has been made by the American left, which is either large or small, depending on how you look at it.

I was educated in literature in a Western Marxist tradition, and have read pretty widely in radical political economy, and in history more generally. But for decades now my reading has been devoted to supporting the plots of my novels, so my theoretical politics as such has been kind of impressionistic and project-based, and my practical politics has consisted of some local environmental activism, and writing my books, which I think of as part of my political work.

You mentioned that when I was at the Bay Area Anarchists’ Book Fair I called myself a social democrat, but I think what I was doing there was trying to differentiate between time horizons, so that although anarchist goals appeal to me as a far future eventual horizon, especially the focus on a horizontalization of power—thus no ruler rather than no law, in terms of what the word anarchy means—it seems to me that getting to that state from where we are now will be best achieved in a stepwise fashion, which might begin with social democracy (or even just Keynesian anti-austerity), then take the next step to democratic socialism, then to some later post-capitalist system of full justice, at which point anarchist goals would be real possibilities. So this in itself is a kind of political philosophy, I guess. I’m not confident it’s right, but it’s what I have, and I don’t see anything out there more convincing to me.

I want to add that I think science is a form of politics, and I like the idea of applying the scientific method to political economy, and would like to see the process of scientizing government, which has been going on for about 150 years now, increase.

In your question you say “a libertarian-communist spirit,” but I don’t know what that would mean, as I take the two terms to be almost opposites. I don’t like the term or idea “libertarian” in any context, and never like to see the word applied to my novels. I’m not sure why it happens. I’ve never heard a description of what libertarian means that sounds

either attractive or coherent.

Maybe this means I'm a statist, and yes, I am a believer in the idea of government of the people, by the people, and for the people; that description is aspirational and utopian, but I think it's a good goal.

JSC: *The Years of Rice and Salt* presents an alternate history of the world that opens in medieval times after a most virulent bubonic plague destroyed 99% of all Caucasians, rather than the estimated 60% that were actually killed. In this world, the various dialectical contributions and negations made by Europeans during the past five-plus centuries are instead enacted principally by Eastern (Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese), Central (Turkic, Persian), Southern (Indian), and Southeastern Asians (Burmese, Malaysian); the Haudenosaunee, otherwise known as the Iroquois; Arabs; and Africans: these include the "discovery" of the continent we know as America, the Enlightenment, imperialism, major scientific breakthroughs (as in physics, astronomy, and biology), the development of historical materialism, and world wars. In this alternate Earth, Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Daoism are the major religious forces, with Judaism and Christianity being relegated to mere historical footnotes.

As in our own world, moreover, certain material and political inequalities exist among these peoples. In *The Years of Rice and Salt*, the Chinese ruling class clearly functions in a parallel manner to the way Europeans have since 1492, propagating profit, genocide, settler colonialism, and power politics throughout the world. On the other hand, the egalitarian-matrilineal Haudenosaunee institute "the best system of rule ever invented by human beings," wherein "all people [are] given the right to be a part of the running of things," while the Travancori League works intransigently to coordinate global revolution against empires, kingdoms, clergy, "caliphs, sultans, emirs, khans, [and] zamindars" as well as patriarchy, private property, classes, castes, and the State altogether. Indeed, the Haudenosaunee ally with the Travancori League to advance the world revolutionary cause, following the victories of the Kerala's armies over the Ottomans and Mughals.

Your story opens startlingly with lightning striking down the Mongol khan Temur (Timurlane), the forced castration by Chinese slavers of the Black youth Kyu, the slave's murder of his master following his sale in Hangzhou, and the youth's subsequent determination to travel to Beijing to assassinate the Ming emperor. In contradistinction, you provide few details about the world- or solar-historical insurrection with which Red Mars concludes—with a couple of exceptions, the specific events of the uprising happen mostly off-stage, as the focus remains on Nadia Cherneshevsky flying clandestinely around Mars, helping to make repairs, bearing witness to the wasteland left behind by the capitalist forces' brutal counter-insurgency, and coordinating refugee movements and escape.

In a sense, I feel your decision not to prioritize the militaristic details of the revolt to perhaps reflect an affinity on your part with Albert Camus, who in *The Rebel* (1951) presents a radical critique of murder and violence, though not without qualifications, as in the exception he makes for the case of Ivan Kaliayev, a Russian Socialist Revolutionary (SR) poet who assassinated the tsarist Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich in 1905—a tactic that arguably could be termed counter-violence. Can you speak more about your views on revolution, structural violence, and counter-violence?

KSR: A very tough question. Speaking as a privileged white male suburban American househusband, I feel hesitant to advocate violent revolution to anyone, because it would constitute advocating dangerous work that would be taken on by others, who would suffer the consequences. At the same time, I question my own notion that peaceful non-violent civil resistance will be more successful in reaching its goals than violent revolt. Is that always true, or is it an illusion I would like to believe, given my own social position? I can't be sure. Ultimately I don't think my opinion is the one that matters on this subject.

However, I refer you to Chenoweth and Stephan's *Why Civil Resistance Works* as an interesting sociological study of revolts in the recent past, which suggest that non-violent civil resistance has actually achieved more, politically, than violent revolutions in the same period (mainly post World War Two). It's counter-intuitive and thought-provoking, in a way I like.

On the other hand, the longer history of humanity suggests that at certain points the suffering of the oppressed is such that they rise up and overthrow the regime of a minority exploiting them, and do their best to institute a more just system. Sometimes it seems that these have been painful and violent lurches toward more just systems. At other times it seems the violence in the revolution has led to a violent post-revolutionary state, or a backlash sometimes worse than what preceded the revolution. So it's a very confusing topic.

It's also important to keep in mind the structural violence you mention in your question. Global capitalism is globally destructive and repressive, and is a structure that has us headed toward a mass extinction event, and already creates widespread immiseration and anxiety for most people alive on the planet. So I would like to see a "long revolution" as Raymond Williams put it, and I wonder if the best way in the current moment utilizes all kinds of political action, including non-violent civil resistance. These are actions I can imagine joining myself, so I like them.

As the Dalai Lama once remarked, whether this hope is realistic or not, I don't know, but it's worth trying to see.

JSC: I wish to ask you now about religion and revolution. Many anarchists and Marxists, being materialists, dismiss



Kim Stanley Robinson

religious devotion as the “opiate of the masses,” despite the fact that important differences surged between these two groups in the First International on the very question of religion—with Bakunin pressing for a more forthrightly atheist stance, and Marx rejecting that proposal as a position that would alienate the workers. Historically speaking, nevertheless, Buddhism and Jainism represent progressions “beyond” Hinduism, while Christianity constitutes a negation of Judaism and the Roman Empire. In *The Years of Rice and Salt*, you evidence the divine love or solidarity that inspires Islam, particularly Sufism, and that can serve the humanist function of promoting feminism, as in the character of Sultana Katima in al-Andalus. The Buddhist emphasis on compassion and the common struggle of “all suffering beings” is similarly inspiring, and Elisée Reclus was right to see the original dharma as anarchist, in my opinion. What relationship do you see between religion and the liberatory-egalitarian cause?

KSR: This is another tough question, but important. I’m not a very religious person myself, so I have trouble figuring out what religion has to do with politics in our time. Very often the major world religions have been complicit with patriarchy, and pretty often with capitalism, so I don’t look to them for much help going forward. I like many elements of Buddhism, especially its focus on this world, and on compassion as an all-purpose method for dealing with others. Maybe the compassion and solidarity expressed by most religions could manifest more in future, by seeing that leftist politics is the best match for their expressed values.

So far the record is so ambiguous. If we see the religions that emphasize mercy and compassion actually acting on

those values, and fighting capitalism as a hegemony that is inimical to those values, then that would be good. We can hope for that: religion as a kind of orientation toward leftist political action.

JSC: Many of your works deal centrally with history, whether actual, alternate, or speculative-futural. In *The Years of Rice and Salt*, you present several different compelling interpretations of human and natural history: for example, the image of a rising gyre, “dharma history,” or “Burmese history”—“meaning any history that believed there was progress toward some goal making itself manifest in the world,” or “Bodhisattva history,” which “suggested that there were enlightened cultures that had sprung ahead somehow, and then gone back to the rest and worked to bring them forward—early China, Travancore, the Hodenosaunee, the Japanese diaspora, Iran—all these cultures had been proposed as possible examples of this pattern [...]” In *Aurora* (2015), moreover, you mention the idea of history being parabolic, cyclical—as in Hindu cosmology—or as resembling a sine wave or an S-curve. It would seem to me that we are at the apex of the parabola, or just after it on the downward curve, such that we must somehow invert it, transforming it more into an S-curve shape. Which view(s) of history do you think best represent(s) the history of humanity?

KSR: I like thinking about historiography, and the various patterns or shapes that people have ascribed to history so far, but as we don’t have any counter-examples to what’s happened, and the entire sequence of world history seems quite contingent and non-repetitive, even non-patterned, I think

we can only regard these theories as highly fanciful, and use them as ways to suggest how to act now.

I like Marx's basic pattern or sequence of capital accumulation and class warfare, and Arrighi's elaboration of it, describing capitalism's expanse from Genoa to Holland to Britain to America. I also like Hayden White's analysis suggesting that all theories of history fit with suspicious accuracy a few extremely basic narrative patterns from literature (going right back to oral storytelling of the paleolithic). This makes all historical patterns look suspect, as being stories we like to tell ourselves, and very simple stories at that.

Various trajectories of technology, culture, and the planet itself all mesh together into what we call history, so a shape for history itself is very hard to see. Still it is probably worth trying, as a way of organizing our political hopes and purposes. It could be said that the attempt to do history at all is itself a utopian project, as we try to organize our efforts in the present.

One utopian shape to history is the rising gyre; things cycle, as with Arrighi's capitalism, but at each turn of the cycle, it gets bigger or moves into in a different modality.

Gloucester: he declares that the gods "kill us for sport" and impugns Bahram for the latter's devotion to love amidst the power of a world-historical course so indifferent to human happiness, while Bahram in turn stresses that courage underpins love, hope, and the commitment to struggle. Perhaps the existential dimension is most present in Aurora, particularly once the surviving crew reaches Tau Ceti and realizes the dream of settling any of its planets to be illusory. Despair grips the survivors, and many turn to suicide. Thus a cruel fate confronts them: now what, if anything, they ask?

KSR: Existentialism is the best way to express all this. I take it this way: the universe is meaningless, but has cast up the human species by a kind of miraculous accident: here we are, brief dust devils of awareness. The only meaning this cosmic accident has is what we make up for it ourselves. If we can make a meaning, good. But inevitably it's the creation of mortal and transient creatures, so it's not easy to see how to make a truly hopeful and inspiring meaning. Trying for one can feel better than not trying; sometimes much better. Even

“Capitalism as we practice it now will not be able to stop the burning of carbon fast enough, because its pricing is false, its externalities are not external, and the system as it exists now allows finance to rule the state and dictate terms, so that there are huge destructive carbon subsidies created by manipulating corrupted governments, and the entire economy is run only for short-term profit...”

Another is the logistic curve, the S curve, repeated upward in stepwise fashion as we marshal new abilities and get better at enacting global civilization.

Often I think of history as a pursuit is just another kind of fiction, a genre—a good genre, including lots of summarization and analysis as compared to dramatization, an emphasis I like. More than most fiction, this genre makes an attempt to fit with what really happened in the past, which is hopeless in some ways, but valiant. Thus a kind of realism, and all realisms are always artificial, but interesting. So history is a great genre of literature, a cousin to novels.

JSC: There are also clear existential-psychological dimensions to your novels. In *The Years of Rice and Salt*, you portray Khalid and Iwang, the drivers of the Samarqand Awakening of science, arguing with the Sufi Bahram in the bardo, or the Tibetan vision of the afterlife, after they had been killed by a resurgent plague. Khalid channels Shakespeare's Earl of

very satisfying. Certainly history, which makes each of us part of a larger story that outlasts us as individuals, is one of these attempts at meaning—as are all the religions. But again, the creation of meaning is another work of fiction-making.

Possibly a life of writing novels has made everything (philosophy, religion, history) look like literature to me. Sorry; my religion, I suppose.

JSC: Passing now from the political to the natural, I find it fascinating that you occasionally portray animal characters in your works, such as the tigress Kya who protects the Sufi Bistami from Hindu-supremacist gangs in *The Years of Rice and Salt*. I recall that in *Shaman* (2013) you depict another cat, as well. In 2312, Swan Er Hong rightly describes non-human animals as our “horizontal brothers and sisters” who are “enslaved as living meat.” In light of the visionary identification of this ethical truth, what of the depiction of the future perpetuation of animal testing in Aurora? Are there no

alternative methods to envision?

KSR: Ah yes; I now recall they had experimental mice on board. I think that as we go forward, experimental mice may continue to be part of our community. I've written about this most fully in *Forty Signs of Rain*, but I don't have a strong opinion about stopping it, personally, even though I do find it disturbing to contemplate, as my writing in my earlier novel made clear. I know that I am interested in and attracted to "our horizontal brothers and sisters" (this is a phrase of John Muir's), and I've written about them frequently as minor characters in my stories, not just the books you list above, but also in my climate trilogy, now compressed and released as one novel called *Green Earth*. I now think all mammals are essentially cousins, and I'm learning to enjoy the birds as well, though they are much more alien. I live with cats, and work in the company of birds, on my front courtyard, and when hiking in the mountains I keep an eye out for wild animals, who are still up there in some numbers, enough to be seen and marveled at.

Environmentalism, nature, and radical ecology are all prominent aspects of your artworks, and the worsening ecological crisis is clearly reflected in the novels we have examined here—above all, in 2312. Set three centuries in the future, 2312 portrays Earth as the "planet of sadness" due to the environmental destruction propelled by capitalism: Africa and South America are "torched" by climate change, with the Andes being no more than a "brown spine," while the Greenland icesheet is in decline, and humanity engages in "climate triage" to bring atmospheric carbon concentrations to 320ppm in a last-ditch attempt to prevent Antarctica from becoming destabilized. In this context, 92% of mammal species are either endangered or living in off-world terraria designed precisely to avert their extinction. You channel the disappointment future generations will likely feel, if there are any, as Swan regards life on Earth: "The only real world [...]. How could they have done such a thing, how could they have not tried harder?"

In *Aurora*, you also depict a climatologically disrupted Earth, with CO₂ levels being 1000ppm when the starship leaves for Tau Ceti in 2545 CE. You furthermore portray a movement of Earthfirsters whose mission it is to respond to the vast losses suffered on Earth during the sixth mass-extinction in which we now find ourselves. In parallel, in *The Years of Rice and Salt*, Bao Xinhua joins the "League of All Peoples Agency for Harmony With Nature" after the Chinese revolution.

Finally, responding to the question "Is It Too Late?" for the 2013 Worldwatch Institute State of the World Report, you write that it isn't, and that we can still save a great deal from extinction through a variety of means. Yet I question the goal of limiting the rise in average global temperatures to 2°C on which you base your reasoning, for we are already at 1°C rise, and look at the state of the oceans and marine life:

the coral reefs bleaching, sea lions starving, whales beaching en masse... The whole of nature cries out. Within this context, I think only revolutionary change—as in the image of a collective Kerala, a Travancore Ascendance, and an Age of Great Progress—provides the chance for greatly limiting the prosecution of such destructiveness, thus preventing this Earth of sadness from becoming evermore infinitely so. What are your thoughts in closing?

KSR: I agree with what you say here: 2 degrees C is likely such a high rise in average global temperatures that serious damage will result, and greater damage may be triggered, such as massive sea level rise (see the latest paper on sea level rise from Hansen et. al.) I think that trying for 1.5 C rise, or less, is better as a goal for a maximum, after which we can hope to ratchet it back down, and I'm glad to see the Paris agreement referenced that. The consensus is moving toward the idea that we keep the temperature rise as small as possible.

I also agree that capitalism as we practice it now will not be able to stop the burning of carbon fast enough, because its pricing is false, its externalities are not external, and the system as it exists now allows finance to rule the State and dictate terms, so that there are huge destructive carbon subsidies created by manipulating corrupted governments, and the entire economy run only for short-term profit and shareholder value, rather than for sustainability. Again, I agree: revolutionary change is needed to avoid a mass extinction event that will impact human civilization hugely.

How to get that change fast enough is the tough question, and I suggest both keeping the long-term goal of justice and sustainability in mind as the ultimate horizon of our efforts, and then also pursuing all the steps needed along the way, in a sequence that goes like this: anti-austerity; Keynesian regulation of the market by the state; strong environmentalism; social democracy; democratic socialism; and then some kind of scientific, ecological state of sustainability and justice for all living things. Call that post-capitalism, as it is likely to be a new thing not yet well-imagined or described.

We'll have to do it fast for it to help us through the ecological emergency, and this will require persistence and alliances between the various parts of a mixed ideological group. The front is broad, so as a general policy suggestion I would say live a low carbon burn life, and talk to everyone about these issues, and hit the political points that engage you the most, and on we go. **CP**

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CULTURE & REVIEWS

On the Death of Ettore Scola Remembrance of Things Lost

BY LUCIANA BOHNE

Money distances and separates from reality. It is a sign of moral deviation. — Alberto Moravia

He narrated Italy—they all say that, from prime minister to the person interviewed in the street. Film director Paolo Virzi (born 1961), who adapted to the screen in 2014 Stephen Amidon's novel, *Human Capital*, said, "He knew how to narrate our people, bestowing on them a soul, without ever failing to make fun of it." Director Vittorio Taviani said, "He was a communist"—and for communists of his generation the present was always an alternation of sweet tomorrows and bitter yesterdays. His films were, therefore, bittersweet.

The news of the death of film director Ettore Scola on 19 January 2016 in Rome at the age of eighty-four provoked genuine grief. He was known primarily for having directed celebrated films such as *C'eravamo tanto amanti* (*We Loved Each Other So Much*, 1974), *Brutti, sporchi e cattivi* (*Ugly, Dirty, and Bad*, 1976), *Una giornata particolare* (*A Special Day*, 1977), *La terrazza* (*The Terrace*, 1980), and *La famiglia* (*The Family*, 1987). He was not one of the Greats (Rossellini, De Sica, Visconti, Antonioni), but he was their son or younger brother, part of a great family.

His last film was an imaginative, intuitively unique tribute-documentary about Fellini, *Che strano chiamarsi Federico* (*How Strange It Is to Be Called Federico*, 2013). He dedicated *We Loved Each Other So Much* to Vittorio de

Sica in 1974, subsequently included by the Italian Ministry of Culture in the list of one hundred films to be saved for "having changed the collective memory of the country between 1942 and 1978." In 1975, Pier Paolo Pasolini consented to add a filmed prologue to *Ugly, Dirty, and Bad*, Scola's homage to Pasolini's *Accattone* (1961), set in the sub-proletarian periphery of Rome. *Ugly, Dirty, and Bad* was to show the intensification by 1975 of the human devolutionary disaster Pasolini had identified with *Accattone* in 1961—a society descending irreversibly into criminality as a result of the "anthropological catastrophe" of consumerism. Where Scola was filming *Ugly, Dirty, and Bad* by day, Pasolini was murdered by night, one hundred meters away—on 2 November 1975. Pasolini's promised prologue was never made.

Ettore Scola was, too, the last of his generation of directors—among them, Pietro Germi, Mario Monicelli, Vittorio de Sica, Dino Risi, Lina Wertmüller, Luigi Zampa, Steno—who had shifted the cinematic version of *commedia all'italiana* toward a serious, politically engaged, neorealist tone and content—that is to say from an up-beat *neorealismo rosa* ("rosy neorealism"), a genre popular in the fifties, to a genre in the sixties which documented the transformation of customs, sexual attitudes, rapports with politics and religion, the search for social and economic justice—all themes common to the genre, set in the context of work, family, and marriage. Scola defined the tasks of the genre:

Commedia all'italiana, to which we gave our contribution, by continuing ... the work already begun by the greats of neo-realism, was a comedy not devoid of attempts at [social] survey and critique, at times self-indulgent, often vitriolic toward the organization

of society, the national and political world, the church, the police, the military, and the judicial system. Our cinema avoided none of these topics.

The genre, which debuted in 1961 with Pietro Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana* (*Divorce Italian Style*), more than a genre was a period in Italian history. The years of the economic boom, which Fellini satirized in *La Dolce Vita* (1959), introduced Italians to the (few) virtues and (countless) vices of American-style modernity, synonymous, to critical and suspicious observers, with a sort of imported barbarism, severing affective and collective bonds, forged in the resistance to fascism. *Commedia all'italiana* directors recorded with biting irony the spectacle of a galloping Americanization of manners, fashion, and language whose emulation rendered dialect-speaking, provincialized Italians, only recently emerged from rags and hunger, utterly ridiculous. This mimetism was the more risible and absurd for being an imitation of an imitation. Italians knew America exclusively through movies, comics, cartoons, and gossip magazines.

The supreme interpreter of this farcical, vulgarized faux-Americanized character was the great comic actor, Alberto Sordi, superb in Steno's *Un' americano a Roma*, 1954, on whose script Scola collaborated. Scola chose to direct Sordi in what surely must be the film with one of the longest titles in cinema history: *Riusciranno I nostril eroi a ritrovare l'amico misteriosamente scomparso in Africa* (*Will Our Heroes Succeed in Finding the Friend Mysteriously Disappeared in Africa?*).

Filmed on location in Angola in 1968, then still a Portuguese colony, the script combined the going-native theme from Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" (one of the film's European characters becomes the adored witch



Ettore Scola at Work.

doctor of a tribe) with Walt Disney's 1958 story of Mickey Mouse's search for Goofy, who had gone missing in the "African jungle," becoming Tarzan. It must be noted that, with Federico Fellini, ten years his senior, Scola had earned his living as a cartoonist on the humor magazine *Marc'Aurelio* in the early fifties. The comedy contrasted the cupidity and imbecility of Europe's scoundrels in colonial Angola and the comfortable banality of life in Italy with the guile-less dishonesty of a pre-industrial civilization. "Jungle for jungle," says one of the characters, "the real one is preferable." Shades of Evelyn Waugh's satirical novels set in the outer, marginal, exploited world!

Other actors Scola favored, who are familiar to the American public of a certain generation, were Monica Vitti

(who was a stellar comedienne), Sophia Loren, Gina Lollobrigida, Claudia Cardinale, Vittorio de Sica, Stefania Sandrelli, Silvana Mangano, Giancarlo Giannini, Mariangela Melato, Marcello Mastroianni, and Vittorio Gassman.

The Italian public identifies the most with Scola's film with the evocative title of *We All Loved Each Other So Much*. Filmed in the long-ago 1970s, it recorded the Resistance, the hope of changing the world, and the disillusionment that followed thirty years later. For a brief period, the Italy the three characters had imagined after the defeat of fascism seemed to have a future of collective and affective relationships, only to find in the melancholy of the present, a bitter alienation: "Our generation really stank," says the most compromised of the three, but it stank

only because one-third of that generation had been like him. It had put self-gratification before the common good.

Or the stench emanated from the secular chapels of left intellectuals, ensconced in the ideological aisles of the orthodox Italian Communist Party (PCI), prattling on about Marxism while attending fashionable Roman soirees. Scola satirized them in *La terrazza* (*The Terrace*, 1980) as a bloc of sterile bourgeois thinkers for whom socialism was a mere attitude, a pose, a chic choice within the narrowly permitted political space of the liberal order—cultivated individuals of the left, in reality ambitious careerists in the service of power. They also reflected, in Scola's view, the advancing enfeeblement of the PCI's commitment to the masses—a loosening

of ties that became the undoing of Euro-Communism as an accommodating reformist and legitimist party. “Parliamentary cretins,” Lenin would have said, blisteringly.

La terrazza exposed a bloc of thinkers and artists alienated from the task of aiding the intellectual progress of the masses—a task, which Antonio Gramsci, founder in 1921 of the PCI, had deemed most urgent, for a potential proletarian revolution necessitated first of all the education to a proletarian class consciousness. Scola believed that neorealism had solicited this consciousness along with invoking the solidarity of bourgeois sympathizers. Speaking at the Lumiere Institute in Paris in 2009, Scola said that he began

authentic intellectuals had warned. The Italy born in 1945 was dead. They were burying it. It was obvious to all. In the tortured 20th-century dialectics of history (and ongoing), the new had rapidly and recklessly become the old. The authoritarian and absolutist *ancien regime* had returned in the guise of the new fascism of market fundamentalism, a paradoxically feudal form of capitalism, which proposed consumerism as the only universal freedom permitted.

It is not, therefore, odd to connect *C'eravamo tanto amati* to that odd film—shot almost entirely in a coach—Scola made later in France in 1982, known in English by the French title of *La Nuit de Varennes* (*The Night of Varennes*). The pairing is only appar-

from where the royals end up on the guillotine. Thus, the “new world” will be born of the corruption of the old and delivered by the midwife of progress, but it will be raised in the wrong hands and will become a wreck.

Walter Benjamin's pessimistic ninth thesis from *The Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940) suggests the interpretation of *La Nuit de Varennes*:

A [Paul] Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past.

Italy is now a de-politicized country — outside, of course, of traditional communists — a dead body whose reflexes are merely mechanical. It is undergoing a process of adaptation to its own degradation.

to make cinema thanks to Vittorio De Sica. The director had been shooting *Bicycle Thieves* in Rome's Piazza Vittorio in 1947. The seventeen-year-old Scola routinely crossed Piazza Vittorio on the way to school. He remained riveted to the spot for the duration of the shooting. It was the moment the vocation to the cinema called him. In a more recent interview, he alluded to the social empathy the films of neorealism evoked:

When we went to see *Bicycle Thieves*, that man's unemployment odyssey ended up belonging to us . . . Even if I belonged to another social class, it became a thing of my own.

Those were times Italians could believe in the future, but now, while mourning for Scola, they could not ignore the destruction of the country, against which his generation of au-

ently idiosyncratic. Their common theme was the break with the past and the dawn of the new—1789 and 1945. In fact, the Italian title was *Il mondo nuovo* (*The New World*). Based on the 1982 novel by Catherine Rihoit, *La Nuit de Varennes ou l'Impossible n'est pas français* (*The Night of Varennes or the Impossible Is not French*), the film is set in June 1791, on the occasion of the flight from Paris of the royal family of Louis XVI of France. They are pursued—in a fictional invention—by the libertine writer Nicolas Edme' Restif de la Bretonne (he had a fetish for small feet), whose travel companions were Giacomo Casanova, fleeing the revolution to Bohemia, and the English revolutionary intellectual, Thomas Paine, considered one of the founders of the United States. These demon/angels of the old and new world end their chase at Varennes,

Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

In the eye of this storm, trying to sweep away two decades of fascism while being hurled backwards into the future for the following three decades, the Italy Scola is said to have narrated grieves for itself. The title of Scola's most celebrated film is on everyone's lips: “Ciao, Ettore. We all loved you so

much.” I owe to film director, David Grieco, an insight into this grief over Scola’s passing. It is remorse:

Faced with the facts (from criminality to the murder of the environment), this rain of tears is a response to remorse. The remorse that sleeps in the head and in the consciousness of Italians.

Incidentally, David Grieco, former assistant director to Bernardo Bertolucci and Pier Paolo Pasolini, the grandson of one of the founders of the PCI in 1921, refused to collaborate on the script for Abel Ferrara’s film, *Pasolini*. Grieco met Pasolini at the age of ten. He still considers him a rigorous and non-conformist ethical guide:

I feel guilty about the film on Pasolini that Abel Ferrara is going to direct, even if I’ll have had nothing to do with it, even if I ducked out as soon as I realized which way the wind was blowing ... I realized that the film of the American Abel Ferrara is likely to become a final, obscene cinematic gravestone on the life and death of Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Grieco’s film on Pasolini, *La macchinazione (The Machination)* debuted this January and has already yielded the result he sought—the opening of a parliamentary commission of investigation into the death of the writer-director forty years ago.

The remorse Grieco attributes to the national grief may be in turn attributed to the two voices echoing in the air of mourning melancholia: Scola’s reflective and almost resigned and Pasolini’s furious and prophetic. Perhaps the mourners hear Scola’s maxim in one of his last interviews, “Collective good is the only good worth pursuing.” Or they hear the question, “Will we choose to be honest or happy?” posed by the three friends who “loved each other so much” in 1945, when fascism fell and the republic was born. Or, guilt overcomes them, as they are reminded of what they have become in the words of the unbridled capitalist of *We All Loved*

Each Other So Much: “He who wins the battle with his own conscience wins the war for existence.” This dispiriting morality summons up the *thanatos* of today’s neoliberal world—everywhere.

Inevitably, too, they must hear the prophetic voice of Pier Paolo Pasolini: “Superfluous goods make life superfluous.” Last November, Italian media marked the fortieth anniversary of his death with sanitized accolades to “Italy’s most significant intellectual of the post-war.” They studiously omitted to refer to his accurate assessment of the media’s role as a pernicious organ of cultural conditioning to political conformity. In the 1970s, as a regular columnist for *L’Espresso*, he declared:

Italy is now a de-politicized country—outside, of course, of traditional communists—a dead body whose reflexes are merely mechanical. It is undergoing a process of adaptation to its own degradation.

Pasolini’s last film, *Salo’-Sade*, had been an unforgiving illustration of the stupidity and bestiality of power. Though it was set in Hitler-era’s pathological times, it was an allegory of the present-to-come. The most shocking sequence of the film shows the fascist

gerarca (hierarchy) forcing his dinner guests to eat shit. Today, don’t we all eat shit, dished out daily by our lying politicians and their mouthpieces in the mediocracy? Don’t we all know this? And isn’t that a reason to cry?

To the secular ceremony, which was Ettore Scola’s expressed wish, they all came—the “souls of the left,” as the daily *La Repubblica* put it, as though it was a reunion of ghosts from a mythical age. Bernardo Bertolucci came in his wheel chair. If he said anything, he wasn’t quoted, but he had already said it all on remembering his second film, *Before the Revolution*. in which the protagonist, a Marxist intellectual, was patterned on himself: “I thought I was living the years of the revolution. Instead I lived the years before the revolution. Because, for my [bourgeois] sort it’s always before the revolution.” So it was for Italy, now burying one who had made them laugh at their own dishonesty, hypocrisy, and opportunism—a laughter now ending in a national sob. **CP**

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